Traineeship Assessment and Planning Tool Kit

Introduction

Social work programs want to prepare their students in the best way possible for successful future employment at child welfare agencies. Since 2008, the National Child Welfare Workforce Institute (NCWWI) has evaluated factors predicting retention and job satisfaction for social work students and graduates of NCWWI traineeship programs. Findings of this rich evaluation suggest that a participant's perception about role clarity and their own readiness for work predict their intent to stay in the child welfare field. Predictors of job satisfaction for these participants include satisfaction with their social work education and the presence of organizational supports to address work-related burnout. From this, important lessons about how to implement social work traineeship programs resulted in a more comprehensive approach to university-agency traineeship programs.

In partnership with leaders in public and tribal child welfare systems, social work educators can affect retention of graduates of social work programs who pursue a professional path in child welfare. Strategies that directly impact retention fall within these domains:

- Development and maintenance of partnerships between universities and public and tribal child welfare agencies;
- Recruitment, selection, and support of social work students;
- Development of innovative approaches to child welfare–focused field placements;
- Curriculum innovations; and
- Support of graduates as they transition into the workforce.

This toolkit includes indicators of best practice for implementing traineeship programs. These indicators draw from evaluation results and the efforts of social work programs that participated in the NCWWI traineeship program, making them evidence informed.

Purpose

The *Traineeship Assessment and Planning Tool Kit* supports university social work programs and public/tribal child welfare programs in implementing traineeship programs that prepare students for careers in child welfare. The tool kit can help to develop new traineeships, as well as assess current efforts and plan for enhancements.

NCWWI's experience in supporting and evaluating traineeships at more than 25 universities, as well as input from NCWWI's National Advisory Board, led to the criteria presented in this tool kit. Though not

prescriptive in nature, indicators do represent recommended best practices. Most importantly, colleges and universities should engage their public/tribal child welfare programs and develop strategies most responsive to their jurisdictional workforce needs.

The tool kit contains specific domains associated with successful partnerships. Each domain contains focus areas and:

- Assessment Questions to support assessment of current practices and exploration of potential enhancements for traineeship efforts
- Indicators specifying the markers of success
- Resources that will support work in this area of focus

Developing and Maintaining University Partnerships

Leadership

Indicators

- Dean/Director and other key faculty of the school of social work and child welfare agency leadership have relationships
- A strong leader/champion serves as liaison between the school and agency
- The partnership invests in a long-term perspective toward collaboration, building upon supportive relationships, dynamic understanding of needs, and priorities of each partner[1]
- Agency and university champions support the partnership, which includes leaders, faculty, mid-level managers, frontline staff, and students to promote sustainability

> **Assessment Questions**
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> 〉 Who participates in the partnership?
> 〉 Who is the mutually identified champion?
> 〉 What does the partnership's history look like?

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[1] Begun, A. L, Berger, L. K., Otto-Salaj, L. L., & Rose, S. J. (2010). Developing effective social work university-community research collaborations. *Social Work, 55*(1), 54–62.

Shared Initiatives

Indicators

- Social work faculty actively engage with the agency to support agency initiatives by sharing expertise and supporting agency initiatives with research and evaluation
- State licensure impacts are understood and considered. When licensure presents barriers to retention, the partnership considers active advocacy to address these barriers.
- Agency staff engage with the school of social work to share child welfare perspectives, the reality of child welfare work, and the work's mission
- The partnership demonstrates an exchange perspective, including[2]
  - A dialogue to shape research questions and methodology
  - Integration of research evidence with child welfare practice
  - Ongoing multi-directional exchange to support goals of both partners
- The partnership recognizes the impact of the public perception of child welfare work on the workforce and develops strategies to impact the public perception, as well as recognize the contributions of social work and the child welfare workforce toward positive outcomes for children and families
- The agency and university invest in addressing sustainability through the lifetime of their joint projects

> **Assessment Questions**
>
> 〉 What initiatives do the partners share?
> 〉 How does the agency invite the school to engage in their work?
> 〉 How does the school engage the agency in their work?

Professional Development and Training

Indicators

- Social work curriculum considers job requirements, knowledge, experience, and skills
- University resources and expertise support agency training curriculum
- Funding for social work student stipends exists and offers sustainability over time

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[2] Ibid.

Assessment Questions

〉 How do each partner's knowledge and experience further professional development and training for the workforce?

Resources: Developing and Maintaining University Partnerships	Type of Resource
University-Agency Partnerships	1-pager
Bilingual Traineeship Program BSW Traineeship Programs Traineeships: Twelve Comprehensive Program and Innovation Summaries Making a Difference #2: Traineeship Legacies and Lessons Learned MSW Traineeship Programs: Legacies and Lessons Learned Child Welfare Traineeships: Promising Approaches and Strategies Tribal Traineeship Programs: Legacies and Lessons Learned Twelve NCWWI Traineeship Programs: Comprehensive Summary of Legacies & Lessons Learned	Report/paper
Your Next Career Move: A Child Welfare Stipend Program	Podcast (NCWWI "Real Story")
Child Welfare Scholars and Changing	Podcast (NCWWI "Real Story")
A New Frontier for Child Welfare in Rural North Dakota	Video (NCWWI "Real Story")
The Power of Data for Learning and Changing	Video (NCWWI "Real Story")
Beyond Professional Education & Training: PA's Dynamic University-Agency Partnership for Transfer of Learning, Quality Improvement, & Organizational Effectiveness	Webinar
Education, Professional Preparation, and University-Agency Partnerships Reference List	Bibliography

Recruitment and Selection of Students

Recruitment

Indicators

- The university has established a partnership with the agency/tribe, involving both entities in student recruitment
- Recruitment workgroups include members representing:
  - University
  - Agency
  - The diversity of the community
- Outreach and recruitment materials exist and:
  - Include a consistent and compelling message based upon the agency's vision, mission, and values
  - Include a commitment to diversity and cultural competence
- Recruitment strategies exist and:
  - Target a diverse student body, including underrepresented groups of students as well as students who reflect the broad diversity of communities and social identities and individuals who have personal experiences in the child welfare system
  - Include orientation to the nature of child welfare work (shadowing, realistic job previews, etc.) to assure that selected students understand the nature of child welfare work
  - Identify a path to entering the workforce for students who have successfully completed traineeships and field placements
  - Support recruitment of current child welfare agency staff through clear requirements, an identified timeline, and available supports
  - Leverage relationships with community colleges and four-year universities to support recruitment for BSW and MSW programs

Assessment Questions

⟩ Who works on recruitment?
⟩ What materials have been developed to support recruitment?
⟩ What efforts support diversity recruitment and have worked in the past?
⟩ What current strategies support effective recruitment?
⟩ What strategies provide a realistic overview of child welfare practice?
⟩ What path has been identified for entering the workforce if completing a traineeship?
⟩ How do current child welfare employees pursue a degree in the social work program?
⟩ What other educational institutions will support recruitment of traineeship students?

![National Child Welfare Workforce Institute — LEARNING, LEADING, CHANGING](logo)

Selection

Indicators

- The university has established a partnership with the agency/tribe, involving both entities in the selection of students
- Selection workgroups include members representing:
    a) University
    b) Agency
    c) The diversity of the community
- Selection targets a diverse student body, including underrepresented groups of students and students who reflect the broad diversity of communities and social identities
- Selection decisions assure that the student has an understanding of the nature of child welfare work based upon participation in activities promoting a realistic understanding of child welfare work
- Agency staff participate in student selection to assure the appropriateness of selected traineeship students for fieldwork and eventual work in the agency

Assessment Questions

〉 Who participates in selecting students for traineeships?
〉 What criteria guide selection?
〉 What diversity exists in the student traineeship pool?
〉 How does the program assess the student understanding of child welfare practice?
〉 What other values, skills, abilities, and needs are assessed?

Resources: Recruitment and Selection of Stipend Students	Type of Resource
Cohort Effect Commitment and Retention Distance Education Mentoring Child Welfare Staff Realistic Job Previews Resilience and Burnout Rural & Tribal Child Welfare Selection	1-pager
Realistic Job Preview Video Collection	Videos
Why People Stay and Why People Go Attracting the Best	eLearning Course

Recruitment Strategies	elearning Course
Screening Strategies	
Your Next Career Move: A Child Welfare Stipend Program	Podcast (NCWWI "Real Story")
A New Frontier for Child Welfare In Rural North Dakota	Video (NCWWI "Real Story")

Supporting Students Participating in Child Welfare Traineeships

Assessment

Indicators

- Assessment of the needs of individual students and monitoring occurs beginning at recruitment and continuing after graduation and through transition into the workforce
- The university has established a partnership with the agency/tribe, involving both entities in assessing and responding to needs for student support

Assessment Questions

〉 How does the partnership assess needs?
〉 Who assures that supports exist?

Resources

Indicators

- Sustainable stipend programs exist and support student participation in traineeships
- The university establishes processes to award stipends to selected students
- Students have access to resources to support basic needs, including:
  – Financial
  – Housing
  – Food
  – Transportation
  – Child and dependent care
- Available resources to support academic success include:
  – Advising
  – Writing development

- Access to a library
- Wellness services
- Child welfare agency staff have the resources and support to participate in traineeships including:
  - Flexible schedules
  - Released time

Assessment Questions

〉 How and when does the university award student stipends? What financial support do stipends provide?

〉 What other resources/supports exist for students and how do they learn about them?

〉 How do child welfare agency staff participate in traineeships? What supports facilitate their success?

Group Supports

Indicators

- Students engage with a cohort of others to foster learning, peer connections, and mutual support (including graduates in the workforce)
- Group supervision happens within teams
- Lunch & Learns or similar experiences support learning and more informal time to create community and build relationships
- Group-based strategies build resilience and identify and address student exposure to workplace stress, including trauma and building resilience

Assessment Questions

〉 What helps to connect students to each other?

Individual Supports

Indicators

- Strategies exist for students to have one-on-one support relationships at the university and within the agency
- Mentoring strategies exist to:
  - Support professional development

- o Provide access to professional child welfare workers or graduates who have already transitioned into the workforce
- o Offer access to potential mentors outside of the supervisory structure
- – Navigate resources, including
  - o School
  - o Agency
  - o Community
- • Individual strategies exist to build resilience and identify and address student exposure to workplace stress, including trauma
- • The university has set up processes for students to pay back stipends should they withdraw from the traineeship

Assessment Questions

〉 Who from the university supports students?
〉 Who from the agency supports students?
〉 What strategies provide students with mentoring?
〉 How does the university support students in managing workplace stress, including trauma?
〉 What process holds students responsible for paying back stipends if they withdraw before graduation or completing their payback obligations

Supporting Students Participating in Child Welfare Traineeships	Type of Resource
Your Next Career Move: A Child Welfare Stipend Program	Podcast (NCWWI "Real Story")
Supervision	1-pager

Child Welfare Field Placements

Planning and Development of Field Placements

Indicators

- The program considers identified child welfare agency competencies as well as Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) competencies in developing student field experiences
- Child welfare placements provide:
    - Preparation for practice in areas where agency job opportunities exist
    - Experiences and opportunities allowing for exposure to the agency's work
    - Enough depth to develop skills in preparation for practice

Assessment Questions

〉 How do field placements address child welfare agency competencies?
〉 What types of placement experiences does the agency offer students?
〉 How do these experiences align with agency workforce needs?

Field Instructor Development and Support

Indicators

- Field instructors have support and protected/released time for:
    - Learning the curriculum and developing strategies to integrated classroom learning into the placement experience
    - Student supervision
    - Ongoing professional development
    - Leadership Academies
    - Participation in agency Workforce Excellence efforts

Assessment Questions

〉 How does the partnership identify field instructors?
〉 How does the agency encourage staff to take on this role?
〉 What supports exist for field instructors in this role?
〉 How do field instructors participate in the leadership academies and Workforce Excellence efforts?

Student Learning and Support

Indicators:

- Individual and group supervision:
  - Includes, at a minimum, one hour per week of individual contact with field instructor
  - Focuses on developing clearly articulated, competency focused knowledge and skills for child welfare practice
  - Focuses on personal and professional development
- Field experiences provide:
  - Orientation and reinforcement of safety practices
  - Exposure to the agency practice models
  - Exposure to all aspects of child welfare work, including the most challenging ones
  - Assignments that prepare students for managing cases and workload
  - Opportunities to develop skills for cultural literacy and culturally responsive practice
  - Opportunities to participate in Workforce Excellence efforts
  - Opportunities to participate in agency pre-service and continuing education as appropriate
- The field agency has developed strategies to recognize student contributions and effort
- The student's field experience intentionally and proactively addresses professional resilience and exposure to secondary traumatic stress

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Assessment Questions

⟩ What strategies exist at the agency to support student supervision?
⟩ How do students become oriented to safety practices in the field agency?
⟩ How do students learn about the agency's practice model?
⟩ How do students become involved in the Workforce Excellence efforts?
⟩ What agency training do students participate in (pre-service and continuing education)?
⟩ How does the agency recognize student contributions?
⟩ How the field experience address resilience and secondary traumatic stress?

Integrative Seminars and Experiences

Indicators

- Students participate in seminars that allow them to incorporate classroom learning with their experiences in field placements
- Students and field instructors have opportunities to learn together

- Students have opportunities to participate in professional conferences about child welfare practice

Assessment Questions

〉 What kind of integrative seminars are a part of the student's field experience?
〉 What other opportunities do students have for integrating field experiences with classroom learning?

Curriculum Development

Child Welfare Competency Based Curriculum

Indicators

- The competency-based curriculum and courses offered:
  - Infuse child welfare content throughout
  - Include child welfare–focused courses
  - Intentionally connect theory to practice
  - Support students in developing a working understanding of Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) processes and IV-E funding patterns
  - Include classroom experiences that reinforce appropriate expectations for child welfare work
- The curriculum reflects:
  - CSWE EPAS competencies
  - Child welfare agency competencies

Assessment Questions

〉 How does the curriculum integrate agency-identified child welfare competencies?
〉 How does theory connect to practice in the curriculum?
〉 How do classroom experiences set appropriate expectations for child welfare work?

Curriculum Content

Indicators

- Culturally responsive practice
  - The school's curriculum articulates clear competencies and specific knowledge, skills, and values related to culturally responsive practices
  - Activities and assignments use local jurisdictional data about disparities, disproportionality, and equity
- Indian Child Welfare Act
  - The school's curriculum:
    - Exhibits clear competencies and specific knowledge, skills, and values related to Indian Child Welfare
    - Offers a policy overview
    - Provides practice implications
    - Presents locally relevant issues and data
- Evidence-based practice
  - The school's curriculum integrates clear competencies and specific knowledge, skills, and values related to evidence-based practice
  - Students have exposure to the evidence base of the local practice models
- Trauma-informed practice
  - The school's curriculum integrates clear competencies and specific knowledge, skills, and values related to trauma-informed practice with children and families
  - The school's curriculum offers clear competencies and specific knowledge, skills, and values related to resilience and secondary traumatic stress
- Leadership
  - The school's curriculum offers clear competencies and specific knowledge, skills, and values related to leadership in child welfare
- Families First Prevention Services Act
  - The school's curriculum:
    - Offers an understanding of this policy
    - Highlights the importance of delivering trauma-informed and evidence-based practices
    - Describes the rationale for placement prevention, family engagement, and expanded partnerships

Assessment Questions

〉 How does the curriculum address each of the identified areas? What strengths exist?
〉 How do these curriculum areas show up in field experiences?
〉 What improvements could be made?
〉 How will the university address the missing areas and add them into the curriculum?

Curriculum Development	Type of Resource
Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) Syllabi	Report/paper
Collection of Child Welfare Syllabi from the 12 NCWWI Traineeship Program (2008–2013) Collection of Teaching Resources from the Child Welfare Syllabi of the 12 NCWWI Traineeship Programs	
Topic: Culturally Responsive Practice	
Cultural Identity and Situational Factors Cultural Openness	Microlearning
Promoting Racial Equity through Workforce & Organizational Actions	Infographic
Dismantling Racial Equity Webinar Series Biases	Webinar
Cultural Competence Culturally Competent Systems of Care Diversity in Leadership Inclusive Organizations Microaggressions	1-pager
Special Collection of Racial Equity Resources	Resource Guide
Topic: ICWA Roundtable Discussion: Teaching about ICWA Dismantling Racial Inequity: Community Collaboration and Grassroots Efforts	Webinar

NCWWI Tribal Traineeship Programs Legacies and Lessons Learned	Report/paper	
ICWA Syllabi	Syllabus	
Indian Child Welfare Act Webinars, Videos, and Podcasts	Resource List	
Indian Child Welfare Act Websites and Webpages	Resource List	
Indian Child Welfare Act University Resources and Curriculum Guides	Resource List	

Topic: Evidence-Based Practices

Data-Driven Performance Improvement	1-pager	
Implementing Evidence-Based Practice		
EBP Implementation		
Implementing EBP		
Evidence Based & Trauma-Informed Practice Reference Lists	Bibliography	

Topic: Leadership

Adaptive Leadership eLearning Module	ELearning Course	
Diversity Leadership Strategies		
Leading Through Understanding The Role Of Life Stories	Video (NCWWI "Real Story")	
Weaving Together Agency Staff around Organizational Change		
A States Approach To Change		
When Preparation Meets Opportunity		
For Missouri Field Support Manager, It's All About Relationships		
Changing Supervision Lenses: Zooming In And Out		
Adaptive Leadership Assignments	Curriculum	
Leadership Competency Framework	Report/paper	
Learning and Living Leadership: A Tool Kit	Report/paper	
SW Leadership in Organizations	Syllabus	
Supervision	Syllabus	
Leadership and Inclusion	1-pager	
Organizational Leadership		
Leadership Reference List	Bibliography	

Topic: Trauma-Informed Practice		
Dealing with the Effects of Secondary Trauma	Microlearning	
Secondary Traumatic Stress	1-pager	
Evidence Based & Trauma Informed Practice **Reference List**	Bibliography	

Topic: Child Welfare Programming, Practice Models, Jurisdictional Work		
Decision-Making in Child Protection	1-pager	
Creating Change at the Local Level and Changing	Podcast	
A States Approach To Change	Podcast (NCWWI "Real Story")	
Workforce Excellence in Missouri	Video (NCWWI "Real Story")	

Topic: Teach Methods (Problem-Based Learning, Using Social Media, Distance Education, Microlearnings)		
Education/Professional Preparation & University-Agency Partnerships Reference List	Bibliography	
Distance Education Social Media and Social Work Ethics	1-pager	
Teaching with Technology Twitter Cheat Sheet Social Media: Tips and Tools Microlearning: Best Practices & Scripting Facilitation: Webinars & Virtual Meetings	Tip Sheet Tip Sheet Tip Sheet Tip Sheet Tip Sheet	

Supporting Transition to Work

Job Placement

Indicators

- All students who successfully complete their social work field placements and academic programs have a path to enter the workforce that includes clearly identified career ladders with opportunities for professional development, leadership development, and advancement
- University and agency partners have clearly articulated strategies to support transition to work that begin during the field placement and continue to early stages of employment
- The university and agency partners work collaboratively to identify available employment for students upon graduation
- Supports exist for students to obtain available employment positions upon graduation, including:
  - Opportunities to apply for available positions
  - Advice on preparation for interviews
- University develops strategies to track graduate employment outcomes

Assessment Questions

〉 What career path exists for participants in traineeships beginning with recruitment and selection and continuing through transition to work?
〉 How do both partners work together to support job placement?
〉 What supports does the university provide to assist graduates in obtaining jobs?

Supports

Indicators

- Mentors support transition to work
- Graduates engage with a cohort of others to foster learning, peer connections, and mutual support that is ongoing
- Professional development activities allow graduates to interact with colleagues within the agency and school of social work to continue to reinforce social work knowledge in their work
- New employees have opportunities to:
  - Use the skills they learned in their social work programs
  - Work toward social work licensure
  - Engage in leadership development opportunities
- Specific supports include:
  - Access to needed training
  - Access to at least one hour of weekly supervision focusing on developing the knowledge and skills for child welfare practice and professional development
  - Access to supervisors when needed

- Access to group supervision
- Opportunities to address exposure to workplace stress and trauma while building professional resilience
- Understanding and access to community resources to assist clients

Assessment Questions

⟩ What partnership strategies support transition to work?
⟩ Who supports transition to work activities?
⟩ What training does the agency offer for new employees?
⟩ How does the agency mentor new employees/graduates?
⟩ How does the agency support new employees in obtaining their social work license?
⟩ How does the agency assure access to regular supervision?
⟩ How does the agency address workplace stress and trauma exposure for new employees?
⟩ How does the university monitor employment outcomes? What mechanisms assure payback for students that don't complete their employment obligations?

Promising or Effective Strategies for Supporting Transition to Work	Type of Resource	
Retention Supportive Supervision Turnover Intention Predictors	1-pager	📄
Worker Resilience Retention Reference List Incentives and Work Conditions Reference List	Bibliography	📄