

TOGETHER

...we stand in strength.

TOGETHER

...we move forward with hope.

TOGETHER

...we advance supports for professionals whose lives and careers are dedicated to our most vulnerable children and families.

TOGETHER

...we achieve a safer, stronger, better tomorrow.



As we collectively reflect on 2015, its triumphs and its tragedies, we want to pause and acknowledge the struggles and sacrifices that our child welfare professionals make every day as they do the difficult, meaningful work of engaging with families and protecting children.

We share a deep appreciation for the courage and tenacity required to keep children safe and strengthen families. It is our hope that in this new year, we will use our collective strength to bolster efforts to advance worker safety and the range of resources needed to effectively support the child welfare workforce.

On the pages that follow, hundreds of child welfare staff, leaders and partners from states, counties and tribes around the country and Canada offer their support and appreciation for the critical work child welfare professionals undertake every day to ensure children and families are safe and strong, and their future is bright.

- *The National Child Welfare Workforce Institute*

Child welfare is not just a career choice, it is a lifestyle. The commitment to assist families and communities to find better outcomes for vulnerable children, and the passion that fuels that drive to protect children lies deeply within each of us. Child welfare workers carry out a mandate endorsed by elected officials and their constituents. This must serve as a call to action to support child protection workers and recognize their critical work as first responders to children in need. On behalf of our child protection agency in Ontario, we stand united in the work we do for the betterment of children in our communities.

Canada

After working in Child Welfare for 20 years, I can appreciate the sacrifices made to help children and families achieve safety and permanency. We share our encouragement for the workforce to take care of each other.

Colorado

I know that they have already given their lives to protect the children who cannot protect themselves from people who may harm them in their own homes. The social workers I work with risk their lives to help children. I deeply admire them, pray for them, and help as much as I can to make their jobs easier. Hopefully, the communities in which each social worker works, the people will support them for it is a hard, and emotional job. We care about children. They deserve a safe, secure, home environment to live while they learn about life and values. I love Social Workers everywhere because their determination to do their best.

Anonymous

It is the harsh reality that all of us who have dedicated our lives to protecting children risk every day. I have been in Child Welfare for 17 years, and most of my career was as a CPS Investigator before I became a Supervisor. There were several times that I felt my safety was at risk and that fear is indescribable. CPS workers need some form of safety net. Many times we go into homes alone and the only life line we have is our cell phones. There has to be more emphasis on Child Welfare Worker safety.

Anonymous

The safety of child welfare staff is paramount to doing this great and rewarding work we all do.

Georgia

As a graduate of the Title IV-E program and CWS worker, I feel that we have a bond even though we have never met and we live in different states. I understand the hard work and sacrifice CWS workers face daily to make sure children are safe as we place ourselves in danger. There is little appreciation or acknowledgment of what we do.

California

Front line child welfare workers are unsung heroes. They go where angels fear to tread.

Texas

Our workers risk their lives every day for the safety of children without a great deal of public support or recognition of the risks they take.

Michigan

None of us can focus on the dangers that staff face every single day. It would paralyze us and keep us from doing this very meaningful work.

North Carolina

We regularly sacrifice our own time, energy, and resources to support the children and families that we have been entrusted with on our caseloads. Many times the personal sacrifices that we all make get overlooked and are not a part of job plans but are necessary to provide what we personally feel is the best care to clients.

Tennessee

In every role of this system we have to protect children, there are stresses and exposure to trauma that is often difficult to deal with. It is my hope that all have access to good supportive care.

Colorado

People will never understand the work that child welfare social workers do, nor the costs to us each and every day as we step into our roles as social workers. I recognize and honor all that my fellow social workers do to protect children; your work has not gone un-noticed.

Connecticut

On a daily basis, child welfare workers place themselves in danger in order to assure the safety of children. Certainly, the general public has no idea that it's not only first responders who place their lives on the line each time they report for duty. Education (for the public) and pay increases for child welfare employees are clearly warranted.

Anonymous

Few, other than those who do the work, understand how complex, challenging, and unpredictable the field of child welfare is. While police, firefighters and other public servants frequently come to the attention of the public for the difficult work they do, the work of those in child welfare is largely overlooked and often criticized because of the heavy bureaucracy attached to it. Despite this, thousands of dedicated social workers continue to do this work because they genuinely care about the welfare of the children and families on their caseloads.

Connecticut

As a former child protective assessment worker I hope someday, caseworkers will receive the respect and level of attention towards ensuring their safety that they deserve.

Maine

Child Protection is such an important job and many children's lives are saved because of social workers. Everyday child protection staff put their own lives on hold to help the countless numbers of vulnerable children. They work many hours of overtime, all hours of the night and day, missing many of their own families' events and activities.

South Dakota

I was reminded of the unsafe places we child welfare workers go into on a daily basis a few years ago. A sheriff's deputy asked me if I was a lawyer, as I was dressed for Court. I told him no and that I was a caseworker. He stated he gave us a lot of respect for what we do. He went onto say that "you people go into places I would not go with a partner and we have guns."

Illinois

I am a child welfare administrator and a day doesn't go by without thoughts of worker safety. Our workers use the buddy system and very seldom do they go out in the field by themselves. The police accompany them on some of their cases. I have always thought the workers should be equipped with some type of radio system in which they communicate when they go into a home and when they are leaving, just like the police have to do.

Maryland

I have been with child welfare here for 13+ years and have seen how these jobs can take a toll.

Tennessee

As a Social Worker I went into countless homes by myself as a young woman. Many times removing children, by myself, when the police did not even want to participant in the removals. It is time States and the federal government acknowledge the dangers of this work and legislative changes are made to protect all CPS workers across the country, including CPS classification as "hazardous duty."

Connecticut

I am a child welfare social worker in Nevada. We do a very difficult and important job that most of society still does not understand.

Nevada

I am a child protection worker, and have been doing this for fifteen years. No one understands how difficult it is to do this job, unless you are truly dedicated. Most of the time, the workers do not get the respect that we deserve, and no one cares about the time we put into this job. Many times we can change lives for the better, and sometimes

we can't. It will always be beneficial for workers to go out in pairs. Safety is a big concern. We service different communities, and sometimes people need to be reminded about how to conduct investigations and home visits in certain areas. Removing children will always be the most difficult part of this job, but it will always be our first priority to ensure safety.

New Jersey

At times, child welfare staff get too comfortable in unsafe settings. We are constantly putting ourselves into situations that can turn volatile in an instant. We just do it, without thinking, because we are committed to helping families and children in our community. Child welfare workers are pulled in multiple directions (families, police, court, department management, media) and constantly criticized. Workers are consistently forced to make quick decisions in chaotic situations. Child welfare workers often work long hours, missing important events in their own family's lives to meet agency and court expectations.

Connecticut

I always tell everyone that CPS workers do this job because of our love of children, and our desire to help families - because we know the over-burdened caseloads, low pay, stressful situations, and danger we face daily wouldn't be worth it without those rare but beautiful rewards of knowing we have helped someone. As a front line worker my family is aware that any day - I could leave for work and never return, as a victim of circumstances related to this job. Vicious animals, disgruntled clients, exposure to hazardous materials, no cell service for emergency assistance, etc., are daily issues for workers. We deal with a lot of the same clientele as probation and parole, law enforcement, jails and prisons, but we do it unarmed and alone- yet we don't qualify for hazard pay and benefits like they receive.

Kentucky

It is essential to keep children safe. It is imperative that child welfare staff are trained and protected in order to keep children safe while fostering each child's positive growth. Child welfare staff play a role like no other employee. They are the mountains that hold up the kids....the hope that fosters positive beliefs...that a child can be somebody no matter their life circumstance.

Connecticut

As a child welfare worker it is important that we all take care of ourselves and each other and look out for each other. Child Welfare workers are committed and dedicated people who put their lives on the line to protect children.

Anonymous

Our hearts in Florida stand in solidarity with child welfare staff across the country.

Florida

As a 26-year CPS supervisor I recognize the hard work and dedication for keeping children safe. My heart and thoughts go out to you all. As an emergency response/investigative CPS social worker, I also understand too well the risks workers take every day on the job, and the hope that we would be safe in the community. There is little safety that policy and practice can offer that can protect any of us from "crazy."

Colorado

I am a CPS worker. Sometimes CPS Social Workers are not recognized for all the tough work we do, instead we are viewed as the bad guys who, unfortunately, have to remove children from a home in which they have been abused or neglected. When you (parent or caretaker) have trauma that you have not dealt with, this trauma interferes with your ability to effectively parent a child, which causes that cycle of abuse or neglect to repeat itself. No one wants an outsider to tell them how to parent their child but no child wants to be abused or neglected and that is what we have to enforce, safety of a child. More laws need to be passed protecting Social Workers that put our lives on the line everyday protecting helpless children who don't have the ability to protect themselves.

North Carolina

We often tell new staff during training how important it is to develop relationships with their co-workers because the only people who can truly understand the work that we do are the ones who also do this work. May we shed some much needed light on the positive work that we and so many others do and the lives that are made better because of child welfare workers.

Anonymous

Having been doing this line of work for 13 years I truly understand that those of us who do this job care a great deal for children and their safety. We are their last line of defense and their voice when they don't have the strength to speak for themselves.

North Carolina

We social workers in this field see and hear many things that others cannot handle...we shoulder on as we feel we are called to do this work. We are strong and carry on...knowing that the vast community around us really has no idea of what we see and do on a daily basis, as well as the challenges and dangers that we face. I ask God for protection over us and to give us the strength to continue to do what needs to be done.

Anonymous

Alaska CPS workers are standing here in solidarity thinking of the CPS workers that work to keep children safe.

Alaska

There needs to be more awareness for our field so that the community understands and respects that social workers put their lives in danger every moment to protect our children. Think of all of the situations where social workers go alone into unfamiliar homes and the risk associated with that responsibility.

Pennsylvania

I am a child welfare worker. I have been doing my job, and loving it, for thirteen years. Our job is thankless under the best of circumstances. It is my fervent wish to bring much-needed attention to the risk so many of us face daily in an effort to protect the most vulnerable in our society.

Utah

Although I reside in Canada, our Child Welfare Staff in our countries are dedicated and risk so much for our most vulnerable population.

Canada

We, as social workers, truly believe in the success of families staying together and value children even more!

Ohio

I could not do my job without the support of my coworkers and we are in the office so much that we become family. We all share a bond that those outside the field cannot understand... that inner answer to the question "How do you do what you do?" We are strong people who innately have a desire to help. The problem is that while we understand, no one else does. People cannot see that like police and firefighters we are upholding the law and running into a crisis situation.

Virginia

It is very important to remember that we as social workers meet the daily challenge of providing support and services to those whom we care so much about, regardless of the dangers we face. However, we cannot overlook the dangers we as child welfare staff continue to face. Let us hope that we continue to provide services to those in need.

Tribal Eastern Shoshone

We must never forget the dangers when doing a job so many of us are called to do.

Anonymous

I understand the dedication, hard work, and love that it takes to be a child protection worker because I am a dedicated, hard-working, loving child protection social worker. The job is difficult and exhausting; however, it can be rewarding at times. Teaching an adult to better parent their child is not an easy task but it is necessary so that they can end neglectful and abusive cycles. Children's voices must be heard and their needs must be met.

Connecticut

I take a moment to ask God to watch over all Child Welfare workers all over this nation and please keep us safe as we go out daily with good intentions of simply trying to do the best job that we can to keep children safe.

Louisiana

This job leaves a lot to be desired and some do not understand what we endure day in and out while trying to serve the children of our future. We never know what situation we are walking into, but we forego the safety of our lives to ensure the children are protected.

South Carolina

As a current child welfare worker, our safety is very important. There should be new laws implemented protecting us. Security should be increased at each child welfare agency. This could have been any of us.

Louisiana

I am honored to work in child welfare, thank you for the sacrifices you make in order for children and families to have a better life. May we make this day an official day to honor all the caseworkers who risk their lives so others may have a better one.

Colorado

This profession needs hazardous duty pay!!!! Workers are constantly forced into unsafe situations with nothing but a pen and notebook.

Connecticut

Child welfare workers are definitely the unsung heroes for children.

Texas

Child welfare is not going away any time soon and it takes a special person to do this job.

Choctaw Nation

You have to have a special calling for this job because it just isn't cut out for everyone. As a Child Welfare Supervisor, I have seen the changes in families over the years and how much more difficult our job is becoming. All I can say is "thank you" for a sometimes thankless job and how much we appreciate all the efforts to keep our children safe.

Louisiana

At times, we are placed in dangerous situations when working with different families. At the end of the day, our main goal is to return home to our family. We shall all keep in mind any safety measurements we must implement to protect ourselves from the dangers we may face in our field.

Kentucky

As a former child welfare social worker, I know how difficult and rewarding the work is. I have a tremendous amount of respect for social workers. You make a difference. You are appreciated. You are amazing for doing the work you do. Thank you for being a light for children and families. Please take care of yourself so you can continue this work.

Anonymous

As social workers we innately focus on the needs of others and the protection and safety of children. We trust in the innate goodness of people and put forth our belief that with the right interventions we can somehow "help". I am empowered and will continue to lift up my fellow workers and continue our good work with vigilance tempered by the ever so bittersweet understanding that the world we live in does not always understand or appreciate the thankless efforts put forth by social workers who strive not for fame or fortune, but love and hope.

North Carolina

May God bless all and protect everyone in this field from any further harm.

California

It is my belief that Child Welfare staff is often overlooked in regards to safety and well-being by society. Our days are often long; never knowing what the next minute brings. We are often sent out into homes and never know what is awaiting us on the other side of the door. Our work is often undermined by judges and other people who are not on the front line in helping others. Issues and behaviors of parents are often minimized by attorneys and judges. I pray for a change for the past, present and future child welfare staff.

North Carolina

I understand the concern our family members have for our safety as my husband worries every day when I leave the house. I am also aware of the example we set for our children as my boys (aged 11) call me their hero because I try to help kids.

Ohio

I work in County California Child Welfare and as a 12 year veteran in this field, know and understand the risk we as social workers take on a daily basis.

California

Our deepest appreciation for the service of all the dedicated workers in this challenging field. The Child Welfare staff and members of our Citizen Review Panel are thinking of all of you.

Minnesota

Social Work is a very hard profession that I don't think people quite understand. Over the years it is becoming increasingly dangerous to do the work that we do. We are committed individuals to ensuring that children are safe and to aid struggling families. We have to always be on guard even if we have had a "good" working relationship with a family. I just want to remind all to be careful and if your instincts tell you something, listen.

Anonymous

I pray that peace and love surround you daily and continue to embrace each of you. As we continue to care for others, it is critical that we care of ourselves and one another. An important gift to give ourselves is to love ourselves enough to care for the person we are. Take time to celebrate your achievements and your contributions to others. Let's do the simple things such as take a break, eat lunch and enjoy a quiet moment.

Virginia

We all know the difficulties of this career and know the type of person it takes to do this work: kind, generous, dedicated, supportive, hard-working, an advocate and mentor with the heart of gold.

California

While we all know that child welfare staff are at an increased risk of harm due to the nature of their work, it's a testament to their dedication that they engage in this line of work. If it were not for these workers, many children would have no voice and no protection against abuse and neglect.

Kentucky

Thank you to each and every child welfare worker for your hard work and dedication. I pray that you will remain safe and comforted.

Virginia

What we do is imperative to protecting our most vulnerable members of society.

Anonymous

The issue of safety for social workers has been ignored, disregarded and minimized for too long. More actionable training like probation/parole/police officers receive should be a mandatory part of the training curriculum of SW. Giving them real tools to deal with the dangers.

Anonymous

The work we do as Child Protective workers is not easily understood by the community and society.

Nebraska

I wanted to thank all of you for the work you do, you are in my thoughts and prayers.

Anonymous

As a Social Worker myself, we concentrate on helping people without realizing the danger we may be putting ourselves in.

California

Our job is a difficult one and it takes truly dedicated people to help those that we help.

New York

Child welfare is critical and many times we go above and beyond the call of duty to insure the safety of children.

Georgia

As a child welfare worker I work very hard to ensure that I am doing the best job possible for every child out there. There are times I am weary, angry, tired, and feel as if I don't want to do this job any longer but I keep showing up every day because I have the privilege of serving.

Arizona

I am honored to work in child welfare, thank you for the sacrifices you made in order for children and families to have a better life. May we make this day an official day to honor all the caseworkers who risk their lives so others may have a better one.

Colorado

I am a Social Worker for Child Protective Services and know the danger of stepping out into the field. I hope that states will do more to keep Social Workers safe in and out of the workplace.

Kentucky