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The California Social Work Education Center

Created in 1990, CalSWEC is a consortium of the state's 19 accredited social work graduate schools, the 58 county departments of social service and mental health, the California Department of Social Services (CDSS), and the California Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers. It is the nation's largest coalition of social work educators and practitioners.

CalSWEC's Goals

- Recruiting and preparing a diverse group of social workers for careers in public human service, with special emphasis on child welfare;
- Defining and operationalizing a continuum of social work education and training;
- Engaging in research and evaluation of best practices in social work;
- Advocating for responsive social policies and appropriate resources; *and*
- Exploring other models and structures of operation that provide maximum opportunity for accomplishing CalSWEC's mission.

CalSWEC coordinates the Title IV-E Child Welfare Training Project and Regional Training Academy (RTA) Coordination Project. In collaboration with its partners, it works to develop promising practices that enhance the effectiveness of child welfare services in California. It also supports and studies the retention of child welfare workers.

CalSWEC's main office is located at the School of Social Welfare at the University of California, Berkeley. The California Child Welfare Resource Library, the central dissemination point for CalSWEC curriculum development products, is administered by and located at the Department of Social Work at California State University, Long Beach.

Title IV-E Child Welfare Training Project

The Title IV-E Child Welfare Training Project offers financial support to graduate social work students preparing for the field of public child welfare. The project offers financial support of \$37,000 (\$18,500 for each of two years) to graduate social work students who plan to practice in child welfare services. Upon graduation, the students work in a county child welfare service for a period of time equal to the period for which they received support.

With academic year 2004–05, CalSWEC began a Title IV-E project leading to a BASW in child welfare. This program, which offers a total of \$15,000 of educational support in the final year of study, is available at California State University sites at Chico, Fresno, Humboldt, Long Beach, San Bernardino, and San Diego. Graduates from the BASW program are expected to complete two years of service in a county child welfare agency for one year of support received.

Major Activities

- **Curriculum Competencies:** The Board of Directors Curriculum Committee is responsible for evaluating curricula in social work education and developing new curricular materials and resources for use by social work programs throughout the state. The committee spearheaded the latest (August 2002) revision of the CalSWEC Curriculum Competencies for Public Child Welfare, created to assist graduate schools of social work in preparing child welfare MSW students for their future careers. With the addition of the Title IV-E BASW project, an undergraduate version of the Curriculum Competencies was developed to reflect generalist child welfare practice at the professional entry level. The California Public Child Welfare Competencies, as they are also known, serve as a model for collaborative curriculum development across the nation and are revised periodically to reflect current practice.

- **Title IV-E MSW Program Evaluation:** By way of a curriculum snapshot, the Title IV-E participant schools provide information about field placements, school-agency partnerships, the classroom, and field curriculum. Participant schools are asked to identify gaps in the curriculum and elsewhere. Another method of program evaluation is the *New Graduate Survey*. This survey asks students to provide information about the program’s effectiveness in preparing them for work in public child welfare.
- **Best Practice and Curriculum Building:** The Board of Directors Research and Development Committee engages in, sponsors, and directs curriculum development efforts based on empirical study pertaining to social work education and social work practice in public social services. The committee funds efforts that (1) advance the knowledge of best practice in public child welfare and (2) contribute curriculum for graduate social work education and agency staff development. Joint agency-school program development and evaluation activities are encouraged to support CalSWEC’s efforts to enhance social workers’ sense of efficacy and to involve students and staff in improving the current child welfare system.
- **CalSWEC Retention Study:** Title IV-E MSW graduates are surveyed within a year and a half after they complete their year-for-year payback work in child welfare. Survey items pertain to graduates’ work experiences and whether or not they continued to work in child welfare. The survey is designed to understand the factors that influence their decision.
- **CalSWEC Workforce Study:** CalSWEC periodically surveys the public child welfare workforce to determine the extent to which the state is meeting its needs and requirements for master’s-level social workers among workers and supervisors. In 2004 it conducted the *Agency Staffing Characteristics Survey* to collect data on vacancies, caseload structure and size, and turnover, among other factors, and the *Individual Worker Survey* to obtain a detailed perspective on the workforce, including demographics, program assignments, and experience level.

Regional Training Academy (RTA) Coordination Project

The Regional Training Academy Coordination Project is a statewide collaborative for in-service training and continuing professional education of public child welfare staff. Six coordinating partners—the four regional training academies, the Inter-University Consortium/Los Angeles County Training Division, and the Resource Center for Family-Focused Practice—provide a continuum of training and professional education to county staff across the state. This coordinated delivery model reduces duplication of training, increases consistency, promotes professionalism and competency, and supports child welfare staff retention in California’s 58 counties.

Major Activities

- **Statewide coordination of curriculum development and standardization:** CalSWEC has coordinated the development and implementation of statewide common core training for line workers and supervisors, as mandated by the federal Child and Federal Services Review (CFSR). It co-chairs the Statewide Training and Education Committee (STEC) with CDSS to address statewide training issues. The project also works to integrate best practices and research into curricula for use across the state, and to integrate pre-service BASW/MSW education with in-service training. CalSWEC convenes strategic planning sessions for the coordinating partners to further this work.
- **Statewide training evaluation:** A national leader in the evaluation of human services training, CalSWEC has developed the *Framework for Training Evaluation*, a common approach to evaluation that can be used to evaluate child welfare training across the state. The project also annually sponsors the National Human Services Training Evaluation Symposium, a unique forum for training evaluators from around the country to present and discuss training evaluation issues. In 2003 CalSWEC received a Special Recognition Award from the National Staff Development and Training Association for this symposium.
- **Fairness and equity in child welfare services training:** The project works to focus statewide efforts on developing and implementing effective training strategies to address inequities in the child welfare system based on race, ethnicity, economic status, or region. The annual Symposium on Fairness and Equity Issues in Child Welfare Training brings together training professionals from around the state to strategize about this vital issue. CalSWEC has also co-sponsored statewide events aimed at county leadership and provides funds for its coordinating partners to work on this issue regionally.
- **Emergent issues related to CFSR, CWS improvement activities, and other CDSS and CWS initiatives:** The pace of change in California’s child welfare system has accelerated rapidly with the advent of the CFSR process, the implementation of AB 636, and the continuing CWS improvement efforts. CalSWEC has been at the center of these changes, providing leadership

and training assistance to move California toward a more evidence-based, child- and family-focused, equitable child welfare system.

California Child Welfare Resource Library

The resource library offers CalSWEC curriculum development projects as well as other resources, at cost, to agencies, organizations, and individuals throughout the United States as well as internationally. Its database includes nearly 4,000 items. Information about the California Child Welfare Resource Library and its materials is accessible at <http://www.csulb.edu/projects/ccwrl/index.htm>.

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California Child Welfare Resource Library

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