



## The California Social Work Education Center (CalSWEC)

*Created in 1990, CalSWEC is a consortium of the state's 21 accredited social work graduate schools, the 58 county departments of social service and mental health, the California Departments of Social Services (CDSS) and Mental Health (CDMH), the California Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers, professional associations, and foundations. It is the nation's largest coalition of its kind working together to provide professional education, student support, in-service training, and workforce evaluation research—all directed toward developing effective, culturally competent public service delivery to the people of California.*

### CalSWEC'S GOALS

- Preparing a diverse group of social workers for careers in human services, with special emphasis on child welfare, mental health, and aging fields
- Defining and operationalizing a continuum of social work education and training
- Engaging in evaluation, research, and dissemination of best practices in social work

CalSWEC, a unit of the School of Social Welfare at the University of California, Berkeley, currently operates the Title IV-E Stipend Program, Regional Training Academy (RTA) Coordination Project, Mental Health Program (MHP), and Aging Initiative (AI). In collaboration with its partners, it works to develop a diverse and qualified new workforce for the fields of child welfare, mental health, and gerontology; enhance skills among public and contract agency

staff to serve diverse populations in California; and contribute to knowledge in these systems. CalSWEC provides stipends to schools of social work for Bachelor's- and Master's- level students; develops curricular tools for faculty and in-service trainers; coordinates statewide in-service training activities, and studies the effectiveness of its programs.

### TITLE IV-E CHILD WELFARE TRAINING PROGRAM

The Title IV-E Child Welfare Training Program 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 (2010)

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 in public child welfare. The Title IV-E BASW program has an undergraduate version of the Curriculum Competencies, which were revised in 2009 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.

- **The Pathway Program:** This program is intended to address the social worker educational needs of employees working in county child welfare agencies in remote, rural, and/or not in proximity to a university that has a BASW/MSW program. The program, which began in late 2008, is a distance-education social work program designed to support students at different phases of their education, from the A.A. to B.A in social work to the M.S.W. It supports the student via tuition assistance, travel reimbursement, hands-on agency instruction, in-field supervision, and web-based course work to provide the student with access to social work education at most levels of educational need. The current focus of the program is on rural social work practice.
- **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 while involving students and staff in improving the current child welfare system.

- **Title IV-E MSW Program Evaluation:** Currently there are two ways in which the MSW program is evaluated. The first is through the Curriculum Snapshot in which the Title IV-E participant schools provide information about field placements, school-agency partnerships, the classroom, field curriculum, and competency delivery. Participant schools are asked to identify gaps in the curriculum delivery and program design. The second is the New Graduate Survey, which asks graduates who have begun working to provide information about the program's effectiveness in preparing them for work in public child welfare.
- **CalSWEC Career Path Study:** Title IV-E MSW graduates are surveyed 3 years and 5 years post graduation. 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 their corresponding career paths.
- **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 2008 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 Prac-

tice—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.
- **Evidence-Based Practice:** 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 movement toward evidence-based and evidence-informed practice. 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. Working closely with our partners, CalSWEC (with the Child and Family Policy Institute of California [CFPIC]) has developed a statewide child welfare research agenda, sponsored symposia on evidence-based practice, and worked to infuse research and evidence into all statewide curricula.

## MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAM

The Mental Health Services Act (MHSA), enacted in 2005, provides funding for comprehensive changes in the public mental health system in California to deliver services that: promote recovery for adults, children, adolescents, and older adults with severe mental illness; provide client-centered, culturally competent, and linguistically accessible services; and promote wellness and reduction of stigma in communities. To accomplish these long-term policy and practice changes, MHSA includes funding to remedy the shortage of qualified mental health staff, and equip mental health providers in public mental health agencies with new skills.

CalSWEC—because of its well-established structure as a consortium of academic institutions, county agencies, and state representatives—was in a prime position to help launch the MHSA social work education and training component. The Mental Health

Program (MHP) contracts with the California Department of Mental Health to distribute MHSA funds each year to schools of social work for stipends for approximately 200 students who have an interest in careers in public or nonprofit mental health services. The MHP has developed and implemented a set of curriculum competencies for public mental health services that are included by the schools in their academic and field program for MHP stipend students. Process and outcome studies also have been implemented to track programmatic progress and challenges.

### Major Activities

- **Stipends:** The Mental Health Program distributes stipends of \$18,500 each for 196 students in their final year of graduate education. Each school selects stipend recipients, provides opportunities through classroom or fieldwork curricula for MHP

students to learn core competencies grounded in mental health recovery principles, and supports students in launching new careers in the mental health system of care after graduation. Upon graduation, MHP MSWs have a payback obligation to work for one year in a mental health county-operated or contract setting.

- **Curriculum Competencies:** The competencies guide the development of recovery-oriented curricula; each of the schools addresses these the foundation and advanced years through academic coursework and field placements. Five modules on the following topics also have been developed for faculty to use: Recovery, Stigma, and Discrimination; Co-Occurring Disorders; Specialized Interventions for Children and Transition Age Youth with Severe Emotional Disabilities; Specialized Mental Health Interventions with Older Adults; and Child Welfare—Mental Health Collaboration.

- **Technical Assistance:** Through a partnership with Loma Linda University, CalSWEC offers symposia, seminars, and tailored consultation to interested faculty, field instructors, and county mental health workforce development coordinators. The purpose of these activities is to strengthen the capacity of schools of social work to train new professionals for the mental health system in California.
- **Program Evaluation:** A study led by faculty and graduate students at the University of California, Berkeley School of Social Welfare tracks student demographic information, progress in finding post-graduate employment to meet payback requirements, and employment retention. Faculty and consultants at the Loma Linda University Department of Social Work & Social Ecology are studying the methods used for curriculum implementation and how well the specialized mental health curricula prepare graduates to work in an evolving mental health system.

## AGING INITIATIVE

In 2004, CalSWEC launched the Aging Initiative (AI) in recognition of the need to recruit and train a competent geriatric workforce to support older Californians and their families. As the state's population of older adults grows, geriatric specialists in the state's social services, health, public mental health, and alcohol and drug systems are needed. A primary AI goal is the development of a geriatrically trained social work workforce who may serve in a variety of service delivery systems, sharing knowledge and skills across systems in order to achieve better outcomes for geriatric clients.

AI has initiated the development of a social work workforce with specialized training in geriatric issues through the creation of a set of competencies for MSW students, offering training to strengthen the capacity of workers across multiple systems to recognize and address the multifaceted needs of older adults and their families, and working collaboratively in work groups and task forces to bring an aging perspective on policy and practice decisions that impact this population.

### Major Activities

**Identification of System Improvements and Outcomes:** The AI has taken steps to identify areas for improvement in services to older adults. The

overarching framework below is embedded in all activities of the AI.

- **Healthy aging focus.** Promote the development of 'aging in place' services and less restrictive services based on needs instead of aging; this is based on the whole patient model of engaging family and community and a continuum of care that promote active living in communities.
- **Workforce capacity development.** Promote social work as one of the core professions that serves older adults. The initiative will work to examine how social work is funded in health care reform and to connect social work values and practice to health care reform.
- **Competency and Standards of Practice.** A well-educated workforce that is trained to agreed upon competencies and minimum standards of practice is needed. The work of the AI will be to develop a shared definition of 'good practice' with ongoing skill upgrades being met by in-service training opportunities.
- **Collaborative Team Care.** Case management and cross-system collaboration in service delivery that utilizes an interdisciplinary approach to offer more comprehensive services and practices and ensures that people are valued.

- **Adequate and sustained funding.** Examine and develop new ways to bill for services to secure greater fiscal investment from government and philanthropy and increased public support that is measured by increased investment.
- **Systematic Evaluation.** Develop a shared systematic evaluation process which utilizes assessment tools for healthy aging to support services that aid in a better quality of life as defined by the consumer.

**Workplan:** The AI has developed a comprehensive four-point workplan. This workplan will be reviewed and revised on an annual basis.

- **Funding**
  - Pursue funding with MH partners for stipends and student support via wet funds.

- Develop funding potential for training in social service and tribal agencies.
- **Public Relations**
  - Develop materials promoting social work jobs in targeted areas—health care, CBOs, and counties.
- **Curriculum development and delivery**
  - Collect, organize, and host training and educational materials, develop sorting and organization methodology to be accessed on CalSWEC website.
- **Continuum of Services Development**
  - Come to agreement on continuum of services and create a 3-to-5-year plan and target WFD activities along the continuum.

## CalSWEC RESOURCE LIBRARIES

- **California Child Welfare Resource Library**  
This resource library provides web access to all of CalSWEC’s Research Based Curriculum Development projects as well as other child welfare curriculum and educational resources, at cost, to agencies, schools of social work, organizations, and individuals throughout the United States as well as internationally. The California Child Welfare Resource Library, the central dissemination point for CalSWEC child welfare curriculum development products, is administered by and located at the Department of Social Work at California State University, Long Beach. Its database includes nearly 4,000 items. Information about

the California Child Welfare Resource Library and its materials are accessible at <http://www.csulb.edu/projects/ccwrl/index.html>.

- **The MHP Curriculum Resource Library**  
The Curriculum Resources website for MHP is hosted at Loma Linda University Department of Social Work and Social Ecology. It includes documents relevant to mental health curriculum development and implementation from a variety of international, national and statewide sources. The website can be accessed at <http://www.llu.edu/science-technology/socialwork/calswecmentalhealth.page>.

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