

Report from the new Graduate Survey 2011 Los Angeles Schools

The 32 responses from the Los Angeles Schools constituted almost 1/3 of the total responses to the survey this year.

I. County employee student feedback

If you were a county employee, can you tell us in what ways your school program did or did not address your needs to learn something new about child welfare practice?

13 County employee students made generally positive specific comments about cultural competency, clinical assessment skills, relationship-building, communication skills, macro-work, and child welfare policy in which they expressed the following:

- The program enabled me to enhance my assessment skills and my ability to build relationships with improved communication skills and strength-based approaches to child welfare practice.
- The course study at Cal State LA enhanced my ability to be culturally competent in service delivery and crisis intervention with my clients.
- Adoption
- The MSW program provided me with the clinical and specialized skills and enabled me to become a better social worker.
- The program really prepared me for macro work. I feel very confident that I can become a manager and lead DCFS in the future.
- It addressed my needs by teaching me ways in which to work with my clients, such as understanding what underlining needs were, and cultural sensitivity, understanding and working with resistant clients, understanding in further detail about issues concerning mental health.
- The program helped me in many ways learn a lot of new things about the child welfare system.
- Child welfare policy development was new.
- More cultural diversity and assessment skills
- Did not focus enough on the field of CPS. For example the instructor for Child welfare never worked in child welfare. I find it interesting that the school could not find anyone to teach this course that is more knowledgeable in this area and who could give us CPS social worker's/students more skills in this area (how to work with this population, etc.). At times it felt that the CPS students were teaching the class rather than the instructor. Additionally the program overall focuses more on becoming a therapist which is not useful if that is not the student's career goal.

II. Field Placement Opportunities from All New Graduates

Were there any field placement opportunities THAT YOU HAD that were particularly important to your learning about child welfare practice?

- One on one supervision
- My first field placement was in a clinical setting and it was most helpful. However, lectures regarding counseling should be provided before students are placed in such setting. I relied heavily on prior experiences during that placement.

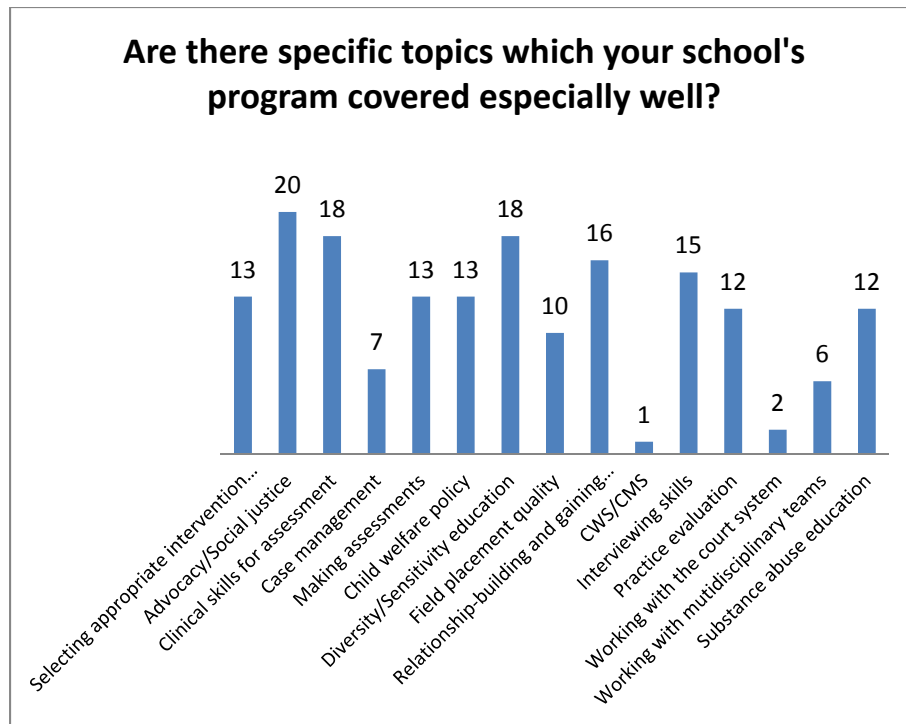
- Administration. I was very happy with my 2nd placement. Learned about how the Department functions and enjoyed being mentored by someone who is very knowledgeable about the Dept.
- I really enjoyed working in the mental health field. That helped to understand mental health diagnosis and it helped me understand the role of the therapist.
- Shadowing home visits with a county children's social worker
- My 2nd year placement at DCFS headquarters.
- Yes as a clinician
- They worked me up to my own caseload. They provided enough support but allowed me to make mistakes.
- ACTUALLY WORKING IN FOR CPS

Were there any field placement opportunities that YOU WISHED YOU COULD HAVE HAD BUT DIDN'T that you feel could have been particularly important to your learning about child welfare practice?

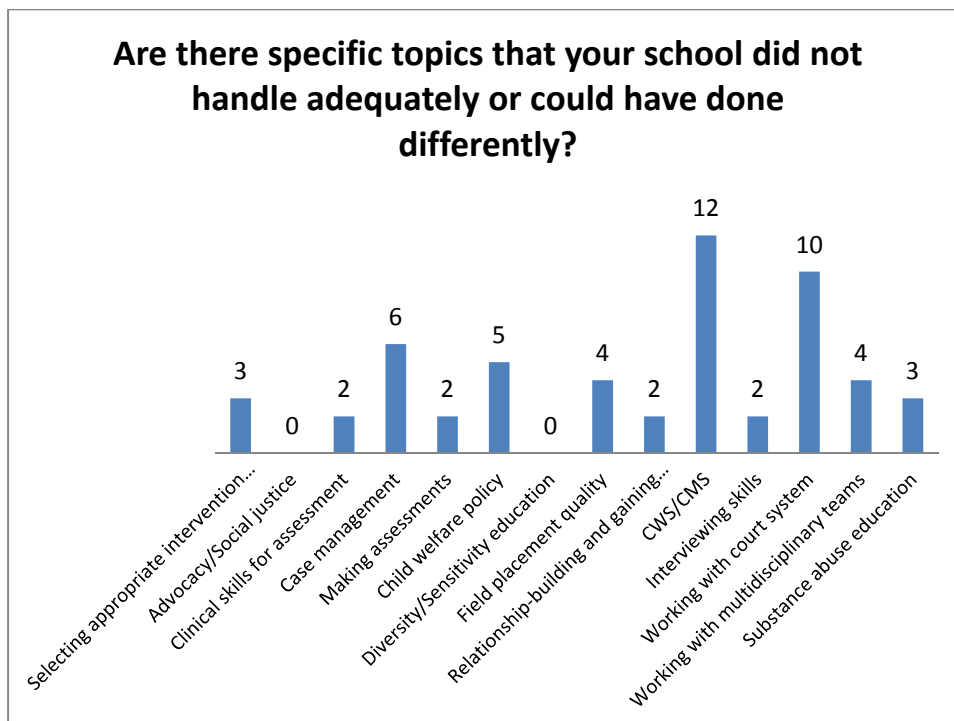
- HOW TO DO OUR JOBS ONCE WE GOT HIRED
- Learn more policy regarding child welfare.
- I really wanted an opportunity to be placed in an agency with the Department of Mental health. I was very intrigued with the reports of fellow students and the level of training they received.
- Adoption
- working within CWS/CMS
- More broad experience to understand the system better.
- Yes. My first field placement was not appropriate given my work experience. I did not feel particularly challenged. I wish I could have learned more skills my first year.
- I really would have wanted to work in the school or hospital field as these are important roles when working in child welfare.
- I did not get to go out on an ER referral. That would have been helpful seeing the front end of DCFS
- Interning as an intake/emergency response intern. Interning as a case carrier.
- I wished I had an opportunity to work in court, with attorneys.

III. Curriculum Experiences

The top three responses about *topics that were covered especially well* were: Advocacy/social justice, 2) Clinical skills for assessment, and 3) Diversity/sensitivity education. These are EPAS competencies for MSW education and not specific to child welfare.



The top three *topics that were not handled adequately* were 1) CWS/CMS (or practice documentation), 2) working with the court system, and 3) case management. Arguably all three of these are more specific to child welfare practice and could be taught in the field (than in the classroom) with real clients. The students do not distinguish between the field and the classroom curricula. To them it's THE curriculum and their school did or did not provide the opportunity.



More students thought the quality of their field placement was handled well, than didn't (10 versus 4). Really small numbers though.

IV. *What two aspects of your work in child welfare do you find particularly challenging?*
I attempted to sort these by topic, but they are interrelated.

Caseload/workload related challenges

- Juggling high caseload of 38 children and their families / caregivers
- The caseload size and expectations of the department
- Caseload numbers
- High caseload
- Overloaded with cases, not meeting all my clients' needs in a timely manner, not having office support
- The unrealistic expectations put on us to fulfill our duties
- Workload (2)

Self-care related challenges

- Self-Care
- Feeling safe while working
- Time management (3)
- Always being behind

Agency-related challenges

- Administration's occupation with "numbers" instead of genuine concerns for clients' and workers' safety.
- Administration
- Policies that hinder us from performing our jobs with dignity
- Agency bureaucracy
- Politics
- Working with a colleague who is not passionate about social work

Paperwork-related challenges

- How the paper work and coworkers make it difficult to do my job. It's hard being dependent on so many others to do my job.
- Paperwork
- Case files
- NAVIGATING CMS/CWS
- The amount of paper work to request, refer or document case management

Court-related challenges

- Working with court
- COURT REPORTS

Client-related challenges

- Resistant parents
- Locating suitable placements; Finding placement for minors 16-18 years of age
- Working with family's that have been in the system for generations
- Chronic family conflict or pain.
- Finding community resources for the families; Resources for clients; Lack of resources (2)
- Watching a client with great potential fail

V. *"If you could suggest one new course or content area to better prepare MSW students to work in child welfare, what would it be?"* Several comments were made about working with the court.

Court-related

- Time management, how to prioritize. Working with the court and how to avoid continuation of a hearing.
- CWS/CMS, Court system, documentation deciphering - how to read a FBI/DOJ/background check, how to read a minute order, practice in writing effective court reports
- Child welfare courses for current employed need to be more challenging and provide new information not information that is already known by the CPS worker. CPS students need to have more variety as to what classes they can take during the program and also more challenging field placements not just ones that are available.
- Hospital social work
- Teach them about the court system as well as learn about community resources
- One that teaches students about the court procedures and CWS/CMS; and current county practices as much information provided was not up to date
- Actual case examples of families trying to reunify with their children successfully and Unsuccessfully, and what that assessment and court report looks like.

Miscellaneous

- Cover policies that some counties use.
- Choose wisely to the program you attend
- Possibly a therapeutic course to help some workers relieve the stress of the working in the child welfare system
- Ethics
- Shorthand (Abbreviated symbolic writing method)
- DAY TO DAY RESPONSIBILITIES FOR ER AND FM/R NEW WORKERS!
- Substance abuse! I couldn't take the course but I also study this area and wrote my thesis on the substance abuse problem and how it affects child welfare. CSU X and the MSW program did not offer enough training and education in this area. Actually many schools lack in this area and it is the main reason why children come into the system.