

October 2021 - Returning to the Campus & Workplace – COVID 2.0

Summary of comments from August 19, 2021 CalSWEC Ad Hoc committee meeting

Background: Earlier in the year, CalSWEC's Capacity Building & Planning Committee determined the need for forming a COVID 2.0 Ad Hoc Committee. The Committee's role is to discuss and share lessons learned, recommendations and best practices on how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted and changed our campuses and workforce. On April 29, we discussed this topic as a committee, followed by a more general discussion with the full Advisory Board later that day. This information will continue to be updated over the next several months as the challenges and opportunities continue to evolve.

I Themes identified during the April 29, 2021 Ad Hoc Committee meeting:

- Social Work Education/Instruction Impact
- Field Placement Impact
- Workforce Impact (campus and agencies)
- Diversity & Inclusion Challenges

II Updates since the April meeting: Changing COVID circumstances in our communities, workplaces and campuses - what new circumstances or conditions are you experiencing? How is this impacting current and future policies in your campus/agency?

● Campus Perspective

- Vaccination, masking and other COVID-related requirements are in effect for students/staff/faculty (may include testing, training, daily health screening, etc.)
- Majority of programs will have in-person instruction; a few social work departments are operating virtually until later in fall or January 2022.
- Wide array of emotions and concerns: A different kind of stress from last summer, but people are hanging in there:
 - Concerns about needs for quarantine: do we need to enforce the wearing of masks?
 - Constant change and need to check daily for any potential change in policy
 - Mix of feelings about coming onto campus, e.g., older adults with unvaccinated kids have concerns about coming on campus
 - Challenges in hiring staff to work in food services: impacts students/staff/faculty
 - Social distancing policies vary by campus/community
 - Not all campuses have large classrooms
 - Some campuses: Cohort model with staggered days where one cohort shows up on a certain day and another cohort shows up on another day - impact of students exposed to COVID - do they come to class?

- Enrollment:
 - One campus: We saw a large number of students who accepted admission, then later deferred. Increase from summer 2020.
 - Title IV-E students: One campus has seen an increase in students choosing to go into financial repayment rather than seek an in-person job in child welfare. Concerns about morale, COVID, manner of onboarding, lack of connection with supervisors, etc.

- How are universities training students on telehealth?
 - Varies by campus: Sprinkled into the curriculum, but not a focus so far
 - Some campuses see this as the next big curriculum trend
 - Challenges in different demographic groups as to their use of telehealth; may be a barrier to service
 - Telehealth showing high rates of efficacy and satisfaction in behavioral health

- Field Placement Impact:
 - The students will be in field placements: some will be in-person, some remote, some hybrid.
 - We were discouraged to holding our contract signing on campus, and thus held it virtually
 - Planning for in-person placements may be complicated; various agency & individual requirements.
 - Some challenges with supervision for in-person placements; Students interact with field instructors differently now.
 - If field placement is remote: some students struggle with internet access; lack of privacy (suitable work environment) for child welfare work
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- Workforce Impact (campus and agencies):
 - Agency perspective:
 - Constant change and need to check daily for any potential change in policy
 - Vaccine/testing policies in effect
 - Variation in in-person vs. hybrid/remote work requirements:
 - People have safety, transportation, childcare concerns
 - Challenges with retention; People are accepting jobs in private sector
 - Huge turnover rate with staff
 - People are taking this time as an opportunity to change jobs
 - Questions about reimbursement for portion of home internet fees?
 - Loss of office “culture” impacts morale

- Office space: how to manage space?
 - Moving to a hotelling model
 - Challenges if staff require specialty ergo equipment
 - Selling off of buildings may have been premature
- Many agencies accepting interns this fall
- Training challenges: How to do effective group therapy
- Behavioral Health: some large private employers are offering full work-from-home as a promise to new staff/recruiting tool

Next steps: Review during October 2021 Capacity Building & Planning/Ad Hoc CalSWEC Committee meeting.