



## CALIFORNIA SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION CENTER

### TITLE IV-E RETROSPECTIVE STUDENT SURVEY RESULTS: SUMMARY & HIGHLIGHTS

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#### INTRODUCTION

The California Social Work Education Center (CalSWEC) Title IV-E Program provides professional education and monetary support to undergraduate and graduate social work students who intend to pursue or continue a career in the field of public child welfare (PCW). The program currently operates at 20 university schools/departments of social work in California, providing both monetary support and a specialized competency-based child welfare curriculum to students with the goal of increasing the number of PCW workers in California with BASW and MSW degrees. The program prioritizes enrollment of current state/county/Tribal social services staff and students who reflect the diversity of California's child welfare population. In return for this monetary and curriculum support, students must complete an *employment obligation* by working in a qualifying (state, county, Tribal) *PCW agency* that is equal to the years of support they receive.

In fall 2016, CalSWEC proposed conducting an evaluation of the status and career trajectories of all CalSWEC Title IV-E Program graduates since the inception of the program in 1991. The purpose of the evaluation was to assess the Title IV-E Program graduates' demographics, prior PCW experience before entering the program, employment experiences, and career trajectories (fields, positions, years worked, and employment transitions). In 2018, this survey was disseminated to and completed by over 1,650 Title IV-E graduates. This report summarizes the results and highlights key findings of our analyses. It is divided into three sections: (1) a brief overview of the survey, (2) results and findings about the Title IV-E Program graduates covering an array of topics, i.e., demographic, employment fields, positions, years worked, transitions, and reasons for leaving agency or PCW, and (3) a summary of highlights.

Results from the CalSWEC Title IV-E Retrospective Student Survey provided several key findings. These highlight the number of graduates who complete their employment obligation and the amount of years they work in their agencies and PCW.

- Nearly 93% of graduates completed (or were completing) the program's employment obligation.
- Title IV-E graduates worked an average of 6.2 years at their agency *during their time* in the Title IV-E Program.
- Title IV-E graduates worked an average of 3.5 years at their agency *after* their employment obligation was completed.
- Part-time graduates had the most prior experience and most years working at their employment obligation agencies.
- Nearly 20% of graduates were promoted to supervisor, 6% to managers, and 1% to directors in PCW.
- The top reasons for leaving their agency or PCW were caseloads, agency culture/climate, and paperwork.

## Survey Overview

The CalSWEC Title IV-E Retrospective Student Survey was sent to 5,500 Title IV-E Program graduates in July 2018. This group graduated from a Title IV-E Program at one of the then 22 participating Title IV-E schools California during 1993-2018. From July-December 2018, nearly 1,800 graduates responded; of these, 1,653 surveys were completed (33% response rate). The survey included questions on the following topics: demographics, what Title IV-E Program (MSW or BASW) students participated in, whether participants were full-time or part-time, whether participants had prior PCW experience before entering the program, and participants' work experiences during and after their Title IV-E Program participation. In addition, participants who had left their IV-E employment obligation positions were asked about why they left and positions that they held after they left. *In return for monetary and curriculum support, students are required to work at California county agencies in public child welfare equal to the time of their support, typically 1-2 years.* Finally, participants were asked about their Title IV-E Program experiences, including: impact on their career trajectory, quality of training, program improvements, and retention of Title IV-E workers.

## Analytic Strategy

To better understand different aspects of the program and retention issues, we examined group differences based on (1) program degree status and (2) IV-E employment obligation status. The Title IV-E Program offers stipends for both BASW and MSW degrees and includes part-time and full-time options. The vast majority of graduates who completed the survey were in the MSW program (89%), 6% were in the BASW program, and 5% graduated from both the BASW and MSW IV-E programs. Overall, 79% of graduates were full-time students and 21% were part-time. Across all graduates, six different program degree groups were identified and included full-time graduates in the BASW program (5%), MSW program (70%), or both BASW/MSW programs (3%) and part-time graduates in the BASW program (1%), MSW program (18%), or both BASW/MSW programs (2%). All graduates of the Title IV-E Program were asked several questions about the status of their employment obligation. Across all graduates, five different employment completion groups were also identified and included those who never started (3%), were still completing (12%), left before completing (4%), completed and left agency (28%), and completed and stayed at agency (54%). These program degree and employment completion groupings form the basis of comparisons in order to better understand the program and retention issues using survey responses.

## RESULTS & HIGHLIGHTS

### **Demographics**

In over 1,650 responses, the age range of graduates was broad (22-78), with an average of age 38. Title IV-E Program graduates were primarily female (86%) and were racially/ethnically diverse, with 66% identifying as non-White and 34% as White. Languages spoken by graduates were also diverse, with over 40% of graduates being multilingual. For all Title IV-E Program graduates who completed the survey, over 65% were either married (55%) or in a domestic partnership/long-term relationship (11%), while 33% had never been married. Comparison of program degree and employment completion groups showed significant differences, some of which are described below.

### Key Highlights

- Graduates were primarily female (86%) and were racially/ethnically diverse, with 66% of the graduates identifying as non-White.
- MSW-part-time graduates were older (mean age 44.95) and least likely to be single and never married (14%).
- Graduates who who never started their employment obligation were more likely to be racial/ethnically diverse (78% non-White) compared to other employment completion groups.
- Graduates who never started their employment obligation were the most likely to be single and never

married (36%) compared to other employment completion groups.

### **Prior PCW Experience**

Results showed that 22% of graduates had prior PCW experience before entering the Title IV-E Program. The average prior PCW experience was 5.4 years (median 3 years). Of those with prior PCW experience, 80% were paid employees when admitted to the Title IV-E Program, and 20% were paid employees while enrolled in the Title IV-E Program. According to the Title IV-E Program contact, part-time students are required to be paid employees at county agencies while attending the Title IV-E Program. The years they were employed while attending school ranged from 1 to 5 years, with the majority of students working and finishing their degree program in 3 years (56%). Comparison of program degree and employment completion groups showed significant differences, some of which are described below.

#### Key Highlights

- For graduates with prior PCW experience, the average was 5.4 years (median 3 years).
- MSW part-time graduates (90%) had the most prior PCW experience of all other program degree groups.
- Graduates who completed their employment obligation and stayed at their agency had more prior PCW experience (34%) than all other employment completion groups who left agencies earlier.

### **Employment Obligation Status and Completion**

All graduates of the CalSWEC Title IV-E Program were asked several questions about the status of their employment obligation (*graduates are required to work at California county agencies in public child welfare equal to the time of their support*). Results showed that 93% had completed their employment obligation (or were still in their employment obligation). Just under 3% never started their employment obligation, and about 4% left before they completed their employment obligation. Of those who never started their employment obligation (n=45), the majority never applied (38%, n=17), or interviewed, but received no offers (38%, n=17), or was offered a position, but did not accept (13%, n=6). Of those who did not complete their employment obligation (n=105), most went into monetary repayment (68%,n=72) or had an approved waiver releasing them from monetary repayment (17%, n=18).

#### Key Highlights

- Nearly 93% of participants completed or were on track to complete the program's employment obligation, 3% never started, and 4% left their employment obligation before completing.
- The majority of graduates who never started their employment obligation either never applied for employment obligation positions (38%) or interviewed, but received no offers (38%).
- The majority of graduates who did not complete their employment obligation went into monetary repayment (68%) or had an approved waiver releasing them from monetary repayment (17%).

### **Employment Fields: How Long are Graduates Working in Different Fields?**

All participants were asked how many years since beginning the Title IV-E Program they were employed in four different fields: (1) public child welfare (PCW), (2) child welfare, but not public, (3) public social work, but not child welfare, and (4) social work, neither public nor child welfare. Overall, the results showed that graduates worked in PCW the most years (4.66 years), followed by social work, but not public (0.50 years), public social work, but not child welfare (0.49 years), and child welfare, but not public (0.41 years). Thus, overall, since beginning the Title IV-E Program, graduates worked the vast majority of their time in PCW. Comparison of program degree and employment completion groups showed significant differences, some of which are described below.

### Key Highlights

- All graduates worked an average of 4.66 years in PCW over their careers.
- Part-time graduates (MSW and BASW/MSW) had more PCW years worked (7.57, 7.12 years) than all other program degree groups.
- Graduates who completed their employment obligation and either left (mean 3.57 years) or stayed (mean 6.44 years) had more PCW years worked than all other employment completion groups.

### **Employment Positions: How Long are Graduates Working in Different Positions?**

All participants were asked how many years they worked in five different PCW positions since beginning the Title IV-E Program: (1) front-line work, case-carrying, (2) supervisor, (3) manager, (4) director, and (5) other child welfare positions. Overall, the results showed that graduates worked as front-line, case-carrying workers the most years (4.71 years), followed by other child welfare positions (1.97 years), supervisors (0.78 years), and managers (0.20 years). Thus, since beginning the Title IV-E Program, graduates worked the vast majority of their time as front-line, case-carrying or in other child welfare positions. Finally, nearly 20% of graduates were promoted to supervisors (318), 6% to managers (96), and 1% to directors (14) in PCW. Comparison of program degree and employment completion groups showed significant differences, some of which are described below.

### Key Highlights

- Graduates worked the most years (4.71 years) as a front-line, case-carrying workers and in other child welfare positions (1.97 years)
- Nearly 20% of graduates were promoted to supervisor, 6% to managers, and 1% to directors in PCW.
- MSW part-time graduates spent more years (2.03 years) as PCW supervisors than other program degree groups.
- MSW part-time graduates spent more years (0.61 years) as PCW managers than other program degree groups.
- Graduates who completed their employment obligation (left and stayed after employment obligation) had more years (3.77, 6.19 years) as frontline workers than other employment completion groups.

### **Employment Transitions: Years Worked in Agency (or PCW)**

All participants were asked how many years of paid employment they worked at their employment obligation agency for four different timeframes: (1) prior to starting the Title IV-E Program, (2) while attending school with Title IV-E support, (3) during their employment obligation, and (4) after their employment obligation was completed. Overall, the results showed all graduates worked in PCW for an average of 1.50 years prior to starting the Title IV-E Program. While attending school with Title IV-E support, graduates worked an average of 0.67 years in their employment obligation agency. During their employment obligation period, they worked an average of 2.03 years. After completing their employment obligation, they worked an average of 3.50 years. Thus, across these four different timeframes, graduates worked in PCW for a total average of 1.5 years prior to their participation in Title IV-E Program and 6.2 years while they were in the program, for a total average of 7.7 years in PCW. Comparison of program degree and employment completion groups showed significant differences, some of which are described below.

### Key Highlights

- Title IV-E graduates worked an average of 6.2 years at their agency during their time in the Title IV-E Program.
- Title IV-E graduates worked an average of 3.5 years at their agency after their employment obligation was completed.
- BASW part-time and MSW part-time graduates had more prior PCW years (2.58, 5.63 years) than other program degree groups.
- MSW part-time and BASW/MSW part-time graduates worked more years after their employment obligation

was completed (4.34, 4.35 years) than other groups, compared to an average of 3.50 years for all program degree groups.

### ***Reasons for Leaving Employment Obligation Agency and Public Child Welfare***

All graduates who left their employment obligation agency and/or PCW were asked to rate their reasons for leaving on a 5-point scale (0-Not at all; 1,2,3,4-To a great extent) for 16 different categories. The findings were very consistent for both leaving the agency and PCW. These top six reasons for leaving both their agencies and PCW were: (1) caseloads, (2) overall agency climate, (3) paperwork, (4) supervision, (5) lack of opportunities for advancement, and (6) salary.

#### ***Key Highlights (Quantitative)***

- The top reasons for leaving both their agencies and PCW were caseloads, overall agency climate, paperwork, supervision, lack of opportunities for advancement, and salary.
- For graduates who left their agency, BASW full-time and MSW full-time graduates had higher ratings for caseloads, paperwork, and work-related travel as reasons for leaving compared to MSW part-time graduates.
- Graduates who left after they completed their employment obligation had higher ratings for salary as a reason for leaving than those that left during their employment obligation.

Graduates who left their agencies or PCW were asked to explain why they left. These open-ended responses were examined and coded by CalSWEC evaluation staff using the same categories as for the quantitative data. In addition, we developed new categories of reasons graduates left based on their responses. These included organizational practices (e.g., bureaucratic rules, inflexibility), health and work-life balance, symptoms of secondary traumatic stress (stress, burnout, depression, anxiety), demands of the work (long hours, night shifts, and overtime), self-care (little support for self-care within agencies), and licensure (no support for hours).

*For those that never started their employment obligation*, results showed the following top responses: agency culture/climate (41%), followed by didn't want to work in social work (29%), career change/return to school (29%), hard to find a job (29%), family relocation (24%), and didn't want to work in PCW (24%). *For those who left their agency*, the top responses were organizational practices (49%), agency culture/climate (44%), family relocation (44%), health and work-life balance (36%), job demands (35%), hard to find job (30%), didn't want to work in social work (29%), secondary traumatic stress symptoms (28%), laid off (28%), career change/return to school (26%), salary (22%), and supervisor/supervision (22%). *For those who left PCW*, the top responses were family relocation (45%), organizational practices (38%), agency culture/climate (33%), job demands (30%), didn't want to work in PCW (27%), didn't want to work in social work (26%), secondary traumatic stress symptoms (24%), hard to find job (24%), positive words (24%), laid off, fired, resigned (22%), health and work life balance (21%), and career change/return to school (20%).

#### ***Key Highlights (Qualitative)***

- Those who left their agency. the top reasons for leaving were organizational practices (49%) agency culture (44%), family relocation (44%), health and work-life balance (36%), and job demands (35%).
- Those who left PCW mentioned the top reasons for leaving as family relocation (45%), organizational practices (38%), agency culture/climate (33%), job demands (30%), and didn't want to work in PCW or social work (27%).
- Health and work-life balance was mentioned by 36% of those who left their agency and by 21% who left PCW.
- Symptoms of secondary traumatic stress (stress, burnout, depression, anxiety) was mentioned by 28% of those who left their agency and 21% who left PCW.

## SUMMARY OF HIGHLIGHTS

Results from the CalSWEC Title IV-E Retrospective Student Survey provided several key findings. These highlight the number of graduates who completed their employment obligation and the amount of years they worked in their agencies and PCW. In addition, differences between graduates' program degree and employment completion status revealed some interesting findings. Finally, graduate's reasons for leaving their agencies or PCW were useful for understanding retention issues. These highlights are listed below.

### **Highlights of Survey Results:**

- Nearly 93% of graduates completed (or were completing) the program's employment obligation.
- Title IV-E graduates worked an average of 6.2 years at their agency *during their time* in the Title IV-E Program.
- Title IV-E graduates worked an average of 3.5 years at their agency *after* their employment obligation was completed.
- Part-time graduates had the most prior experience and most years working at their employment obligation agencies.
- Nearly 20% of graduates were promoted to supervisor, 6% to managers, and 1% to directors in PCW.
- Part-time graduates were older, had more prior PCW experience, had more years of service in PCW, and had more years at their agencies after their employment obligation than full-time graduates.
- Full-time graduates were younger, had less prior PCW experience, had less years of service in PCW, and had fewer years in their agencies after their employment obligation than part-time graduates.
- The top reasons for leaving both their agencies and PCW were caseloads, overall agency climate, and paperwork.
- Other reasons for leaving, according to the qualitative data, were organizational practices, health and work-life balance, symptoms of secondary traumatic stress, work demands, self-care, and licensure.
- Health and work-life balance was mentioned by 36% of those who left their agency and by 21% who left PCW.
- Symptoms of secondary traumatic stress (stress, burnout, depression, anxiety) was mentioned by 28% of those who left their agency and by 21% who left PCW.

### **About CalSWEC**

CalSWEC facilitates and supports statewide partnerships for the education and training of social workers to ensure culturally responsive, effective, and high-quality health and social service delivery to the people of California. In support of its mission, CalSWEC's goals are to (1) prepare a diverse group of social workers for careers in human services, with special emphasis in the fields of child welfare, integrated behavioral health, and aging; (2) define and operationalize a continuum of social work education and training; and (3) engage in evaluation, research, and dissemination of best practices in social work. Created in 1990 through a partnership of social work educators and practitioners, CalSWEC is dedicated to developing a professional social service workforce to effectively serve California's diverse population. The focus of CalSWEC, hosted by the School of Social Welfare at the University of California, Berkeley, is on public child welfare, integrated behavioral health, and aging. For information about CalSWEC please visit: <https://calswec.berkeley.edu/>

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