

# **Chapter 1**

## **Introduction to the Child Welfare Workforce Professional Education Program (CWWPEP)**

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## **INTRODUCTION TO THE CHILD WELFARE WORKFORCE PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION PROGRAM**

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# Chapter 1

## INTRODUCTION TO THE CHILD WELFARE WORKFORCE PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION PROGRAM

### ***Background***

Ohio's children services agencies are charged with some of the most challenging and important responsibilities in human services – to protect children from abuse, neglect and sexual abuse, and to provide them with safe and nurturing care in permanent families. These activities require child welfare practitioners to have a well developed repertoire of highly specialized social work skills not typically taught in formal university education programs. As a result, most newly hired child welfare staff are poorly prepared for their jobs. Child welfare organizations have historically had to rely on extensive in-service training to address this problem.

In an effort to resolve this problem, the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) convened a meeting of Ohio social work educators. The group was charged with developing a plan for a university-based education program, funded by Federal IV-E dollars, that would prepare social work professionals for employment in the public child welfare field. The program was to be fully coordinated with the ODJFS in-service training system for public child welfare agency staff. The goal was to create an integrated system of education and training, based on commonly shared values, competencies, and curricula, that would provide qualified applicants to fill positions in public child welfare agencies. The proposed program would have the following primary objectives:

1. To prepare students in both Bachelors- and Masters-level social work programs for immediate employment in the public child welfare system upon their graduation, thereby assuring they have acquired the essential knowledge and skills, with full equivalence to the standardized Core Curriculum for Child Welfare Caseworkers, modules 101-104, offered through the Ohio Child Welfare Training Program (OCWTP)
2. To enable employees in child welfare agencies to pursue advanced social work degrees that enhance their child welfare practice and management skills and provide opportunities for career advancement that help retain employees in the public child welfare field

## ***The University Partnership Committee***

The initial group of social work educators then partnered with representatives of both state and local child welfare agencies, the OCWTP, Public Children Services Association of Ohio (PCSAO), and the Institute for Human Services (IHS) to comprise the final University Partnership group.

From this group, the Partnership Committee was formed and charged by ODJFS to recommend a uniform sequence of child welfare coursework and field placement experiences to be implemented by participating college and university social work programs.

### **Mission**

The Partnership Committee agreed on the following mission statement to guide its work:

The mission of the Child Welfare Workforce Professional Education Program (CWWPEP) is to develop creative child welfare leaders, policy makers, managers, and direct service practitioners who have the capacity for critical thinking and to promote best practice and highest quality service to children, families, and communities. The CWWPEP accomplishes this through the coordinated and integrated provision of quality social work education and training.

### **Objectives**

The Partnership Committee identified four ways by which the CWWPEP would support the public child welfare system:

1. Ensuring that, in accordance with Ohio House Bill 448, all newly hired caseworkers would have, or achieve within five years of employment, an undergraduate or graduate degree in a job-related, human services field
2. Reducing staff turnover in public child welfare agencies
3. Maximizing the expenditure of in-service training resources
4. Creating career ladders and ongoing professional development

## ***CWWPEP Pilot Program July 1, 2002 – June 30, 2003***

In early 2002, the Partnership Committee presented to ODJFS a proposal that articulated a programmatic vision for the CWWPEP. After reviewing the committee's proposal, ODJFS agreed to fund a one year pilot in three state universities: the University of Akron, the University of Cincinnati, and The Ohio State University.

### **Goals for the Pilot**

1. Establishing courses and field placements specifically designed to yield measurable skill and knowledge outcomes that would enable graduates to “hit the ground running” upon employment at a public children service agency
2. Establishing rapport between the universities and their local participating agencies
3. Creating a seamless learning opportunity for students that fosters the smooth transition of learning from classroom to field placement and back
4. Providing all necessary support, both academic and social, to allow participating students to develop into child welfare professionals

### **Implementation of the Pilot**

ODJFS did not formally approve initiation of a pilot until May 2002 and did not make funding available until July 2002. Because they needed to have the CWWPEP available to students by fall 2002, the three universities had to develop their programs very quickly and have them approved not only by ODJFS but also by their own university administrations.

In late August, the University of Cincinnati Social Work Department had to withdraw from the pilot because it was unable to reach an agreement with its legal and financial aid departments as to how treatment of the Federal Title IV-E scholarship would affect student grants and loans.

The University of Akron and The Ohio State University did obtain approval from their administrations and subsequently signed contracts with ODJFS. The schools then recruited students and managed their pilot programs during academic year 2002-2003.

## **Students Accepted into the Pilot**

University of Akron	6
The Ohio State University	10

## **Students Successfully Completing the Pilot**

University of Akron	6
The Ohio State University	9

## ***CWWPEP Expansion July 1, 2003 – June 30, 2005***

In February 2003 ODJFS agreed in principle to expand the CWWPEP by inviting more state universities to participate and by increasing funds to the University of Akron and The Ohio State University to allow more students to participate.

ODJFS required that a university wishing to participate in the CWWPEP expansion must:

1. Have no fewer than seven qualified junior or senior social work students willing to participate in the scholarship program
2. Sign a contract with ODJFS and fulfill all contractual obligations
3. Offer participating students two public child welfare classes with CORE equivalence and employ the course instructors
4. Hire a campus coordinator who would act as liaison among the CWWPEP students, agency field instructors, and course instructors