

GUIDING QUESTIONS TO SUPPORT TRAINEESHIP PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

Although there may be some similarities across activities, each traineeship program exists within a unique **context**: a particular school, a particular local and state child welfare environment, with unique students and faculty, and child welfare systems with unique workforce strengths and challenges. This document translates many of the “lessons learned” by traineeships from 2009-2014 into “guiding questions” that can be used for reflection by partners when schools and agencies are either developing new traineeship programs or evaluating existing ones.

Along with this series of questions, there are a number of important resources listed below that can offer inspiration and guidance as programs and partners plan, reflect and evaluate. These resources are available at <http://www.ncwwi.org/index.php/teams-services/university-partnerships> -

- **Twelve NCWWI Traineeship Programs: Comprehensive Summary of Legacies & Lessons Learned**
- **NCWWI BSW Traineeship Programs: Legacies & Lessons Learned**
- **NCWWI MSW Traineeship Programs: Legacies & Lessons Learned**
- **NCWWI Tribal Traineeship Programs: Legacies & Lessons Learned**
- **NCWWI Bilingual Traineeship Program: Legacies & Lessons Learned**
- **Collection of NCWWI Traineeship Program Syllabi**
- **Collection of Teaching Resources from NCWWI Traineeship Program**
- **Syllabi**
- **NCWWI Traineeship Promising Approaches & Strategies**
- **American Indian Traineeship Project**

Developing and/or Sustaining University-Agency Partnerships

Questions for All Programs:

- What is the current status of your relationship with the child welfare agency (e.g. a pre-existing community research collaboration, a Title IV-E program, relationship that is already in existence yet needs revitalizing or have to develop a new partnership all together)?
- What is the structure of your state child welfare system and who has authority to make decisions relevant to the traineeship (e.g. personnel state or county)?
- Do you have a formal structure for communicating with your agency partner (e.g. monthly meetings or teleconferences)?
- What relationship building and maintenance activities will you put in place for the partnership?



- What steps would you need to take to create a shared decision-making team of the agency, student and school?
- What shared decision-making protocols and processes need to be developed through all the phases of the traineeship (e.g. recruitment, selection, curriculum development, field placements, transition to work)?
- Do you have a process in place for joint problem solving and troubleshooting?

Questions that Speak to Unique Concerns:

- How does geography impact all of the above? What are the different partnership challenges for rural programs especially when significant distances separate program partners?
- How do tribal child welfare agencies and nations (both on and off reservation land) differ and what is required to sustain the partnership with tribal nations?
- What impact do the Tribal Councils and Tribal Courts have on the partnerships?

Recruitment & Selection

Questions for All Programs:

- Who is the student you are recruiting?
- Will it be the general population of students or a specific population?
- To what extent is background important or not important (e.g. rural, urban, ethnicity, lives in the child welfare community) in recruitment and selection?
- How do you define “child welfare” placements? Is it only those services in the public sector, only services in the private sector, or a combination of services?
- What outcome do you want to achieve through recruitment (e.g. increase diversity)?
- What is the role of the agency partner in recruitment and in the development of selection criteria?
- What is our plan for agency engagement in the process of recruitment and selection?
- What are, and how can we build on, already existing recruitment strategies in our school and agency?
- What new recruitment strategies might you need to develop based on your population and outcome?
- What are the student selection criteria?
- Who will be involved in developing the criteria?
- How might you assess commitment to the field of child welfare during the selection process?
- How might student commitment be formalized (e.g. student promissory notes)?

Questions that Speak to Unique Concerns:

- How do first generation students play a role in the recruitment process?
- What do agency leaders say about working with BSW students? What is their degree of fit with workforce needs?
- One of the best recruitment efforts for tribal nations/students is “word of mouth” and awareness of the benefits of social work. How can schools interact with alumni and BSW/MSW’s from other universities to involve these individuals in the recruitment process?
- Can you share how “allies” (students who are non-tribal but have an interest and commitment in working with tribal nations) will be selected?

- Can you explain the importance of Tribal Colleges and Universities in relation to mainstream universities and your school?

Student Support

General Questions for All Programs:

- What different forms of student support will the traineeship provide (e.g. field placements, financial, peer, academic, mentorship, Student Learning Teams and Change Projects)?
- What is the role of the school and the agency as partners in providing student support (e. g. agency may provide professional mentors, facilitate change projects)?
- What can the agency do to support students (e. g. paid work release for school time, change paid employment duties to meet the criteria for field placements)?
- Will there be specialized courses or seminars at the school and/or agency?
- Are student supports taking place in both the university and agency contexts?
- Are there existing avenues of student support that can be harnessed by the traineeship (e.g. already existing Title-IV-E structures, licensing preparation courses, specialized agency trainings)?
- How will you harness peer support?
- What kind of academic support will you provide?
- How will you assist students with work/family/school life balance?
- How will you address self-care?
- How will you attend to, and meet the needs of, diverse students?
- How can technology and distance learning be used to support the trainees?
- How will you engage the other faculty in your school to support the trainees?

Questions that Speak to Unique Concerns:

- What supports may be especially important for the BSW-level student?
- How will you deal with the issue of travel in rural areas? In urban areas?
- American Indian students experience isolation, homesickness, and racism in universities across the country. How will your school provide support to create an environment that will support the student to cope with these issues?
- What support programs, organizations, and academic programs on campus support American Indian students?

Curriculum Development

Questions for All Programs:

- How does your curriculum prepare students to work with diverse populations?
- What specialized curriculum may you need to develop that is related to specific focus and goals of your traineeship?
- What kinds of innovative assignments could be developed to support the unique features of your program?
- Is your curriculum representative of all child welfare populations?
- How are race, ethnicity, gender, age, ability, sexual orientation, religion, and family structure addressed in your curriculum?
- How might child welfare content be infused throughout your curriculum?

- How might your curriculum be designed to allow students to complete pre-employment training while still in school?
- How well does your curriculum and program identify and evaluate competencies that are consistent with CSWE or state-wide child welfare competencies?
- How responsive is your curriculum to changes in federal policy such as the focus on child and family well-being, evidence-based practice and trauma informed child welfare practice?
- What specialized learning opportunities could you create that might benefit students, field instructors or other child welfare employees?

Questions that Speak to Unique Concerns:

- How is the generalist practice foundation of the BSW curriculum a fit with preparation of child welfare students?
- How were students prepared to work in urban areas? In rural areas?
- American Indian students indicate they feel validated when curriculum includes tribal nations’ histories, beliefs, and issues. How will your curriculum content validate the American Indian population, cultures, and critical issues?
- Knowledge of the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) of 1978 is pivotal in working in both tribal and mainstream child welfare agencies. How is this federal law addressed in the classroom?

Developing & Maintaining Field Placements

Questions for All Programs:

- How does the design of the field placement experience support the goals of your program?
- What innovative projects can be built into the field experience that support workforce development and help students become leaders?
- How can you meet the challenge of insufficient numbers of field instructors?
- How do you support the field instructors you have?
- What is the nature of the communication between field instructors, program faculty and agency administrators?
- How can agencies support students while in the field placement?
- How can the school and agency partner in the provision of support to students and field instructors?
- What might be some benefits of rotational models of field placements?
- How might you establish an “early warning system” with field instructors and faculty for problem-solving and prevention purposes?

Questions that Speak to Unique Concerns:

- How did the rural or urban context matter (or not matter) with respect to placement development?
- Can you talk about developing field placements for MSW students as similar or different than those for BSW students? To what extent did you use the same instructors?
- To what extent is there sufficient field instructor capacity in rural areas? How will you address this if need be?
- How do field placements differ in the tribal nations’ child welfare departments?

- Nationwide there remains schools who do not emphasize or teach the importance and use of the ICWA. Students are told in the classroom “that it is a state law so they don’t have to follow it in this state”, in field they are told not to follow the law “because it takes too much time”, and “the children are probably not Indian anyway”. Students from NCWWI shared this was the most difficult aspect of their field placement. How will you address this issue for the student and the field placement supervisor/agency?

Transition to Work

Questions for All Programs:

- How will you and your agency partner begin to plan for transition to work before graduation (e.g. co-develop specialized courses that meet agency orientation requirements, use a common set of competencies in the development of curriculum, assessment of field instruction and in-service training)?
- What communication process will be set up with the agency to develop transition to work strategies?
- How will you and your agency partners build in both formal and informal structures to support alumni during the transition to work (e.g. brown bag lunches for alumni at the workplace, support from faculty after graduation, continued use of mentoring, coaching on how to apply social work learning when back on the job and how to respond adaptively to organizational barriers, resilience training)?
- How can you use technology to provide knowledge and peer and faculty support during transition to work?
- How will you engage and retain alumni (e.g. webinars, job hunting strategy workshops, social networks)?
- How will you introduce students to NCWWI resources and networks during school and after graduation?

Questions that Speak to Unique Concerns:

- How can BSW students be supported in their professional development upon entering or returning to the workforce?
- How does technology help and/or hinder with respect to rural areas?
- When an individual becomes a student, there is a process of orientation, adjustment, and understanding of the student, family/extended family, and tribal nation and that they will be away from home and unable to participate fully in activities if they are unable to return home/reservation. When they graduate, there is a need for a ceremony to re-introduce them to their or another tribal community as a professional. How would this be accomplished by your school?

Fully Utilizing & Expanding NCWWI Resources

General Questions for All Programs

- How can local child welfare leaders, faculty, and students be encouraged to use NCWWI resources?
- How can you use NCWWI resources to expand the reach of your program?

- How can your program and local, state, or tribal agency enhance and contribute to developing NCWWI resources?
- How might you use NCWWI as a vehicle for networking, collaboration and problem solving?
- What do you need from NCWWI staff to better assist you in identifying, accessing and using NCWWI resources?

Next Steps & Future Directions

General Question for All Programs

- What new knowledge will your partnership program contribute to child welfare workforce development?

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