



## **2019-2020 Child Welfare Stipend Program Announcement\***

### **Program Overview**

The Title IV-E child welfare stipend program (stipend program) is part of a national effort to invest in the social work education of selected students in order to attract qualified professionals into the field of public child welfare. The stipend program is made possible through funds available from Title IV-E of the Social Security Act and matched funds from the Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS). CDHS contracts with MSU Denver's Social Work Department to provide the stipends and other benefits of the program.

Additional child welfare stipend programs exist at the University of Denver's (DU) Graduate School of Social Work (GSSW), Colorado State University (CSU) Pueblo, and Colorado State University (CSU) Fort Collins. These social work programs, as well as, representatives from CDHS and county departments of human/social services encompass the Colorado Child Welfare Stipend Committee. The Committee is responsible for overseeing the recruitment, application, selection and retention of stipend recipients to the child welfare field in Colorado.

MSU Denver's child welfare stipend recipients will enter into a contract with the Department of Social Work, formally committing them to the terms included in this program announcement. Stipend recipients will receive cash stipend for the academic year. Payments are dispersed two times per year, at the beginning of the Fall and Spring semesters. Stipend amounts range from \$3,250-\$6,500 for BSSW and \$5,250-\$13,000 for MSW. Stipend amounts are based on eligibility and the student's status in the social work program (part-time, full-time, etc.). Stipend recipients agree to complete one year (12 months) of work "payback" in a Colorado county department human services or Tribal child welfare agency for each year of stipend funding received.

### **Student Eligibility and Selection**

Child welfare stipends are available to students in both the full time and part time BSSW and MSW programs, including those completing their degrees online and MSW Advanced Standing students. Students of color and bilingual students and students whose first priority is to complete their payback work requirements in a rural Colorado county are encouraged to apply.

BSSW students should apply for a stipend during their junior year to receive a stipend for their senior year in the program, when they are in their field placement.

MSW students can apply for a stipend prior to being accepted into the MSU Denver program for their foundation year (Regular Program) or concentration year (Advanced Standing). Foundation year students can also apply to receive a stipend for their concentration year. Students must be

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admitted into the social work program to interview and receive a stipend. If students are in the MSW Program on the full time plan, they are eligible to apply for the stipend.

If students are in the MSW Program on the part time plan, see the *Am I Eligible for a Part-Time Stipend?* document available

from: <https://msudenver.edu/socialwork/scholarshipstipends/childwelfarestipendprogram/eligibilityrequirements/>, for more information about when they are eligible to receive a stipend.

County employees who receive a part-time stipend and who are not in their field year are exempt from the field requirement for this half of their stipend, but will be expected to complete the field requirement as part of their educational requirements and before their payback employment can begin.

Part-time students who are not county employees and not in their field experience are NOT eligible to receive a stipend until they are in their year of field.

To be eligible for a child welfare stipend, students must:

- Apply to the BSSW or MSW program – students must be accepted into the MSW program to interview and accept the stipend. Admittance into the program will be determined in advance of the second round of stipend interviews.
- Apply and interview for the stipend.
- Have and maintain a valid Colorado Driver's License, a working vehicle, proof of insurance.
- Meet county requirements for hire based on a background check and a check of their driving record.

### **Selection Criteria**

The selection of stipend students will be made by the MSU Denver social work department and a selection team consisting of members of the statewide Child Welfare Stipend Committee. Selection is based on academic history, demonstrated writing ability, experience, and demonstrated commitment to the field of child welfare. Preference may be given to applicants demonstrating a commitment to working in rural Colorado county department of social/human services. In addition, preference may be given to applicants who are bilingual, in an effort to meet the needs of the child welfare system in Colorado.

### **Academic Requirements**

Stipend recipients must complete the entire social work program and remain in good standing.

**BSSW Stipend Recipients:** The following courses must be completed by stipend recipients BEFORE beginning their senior year. These courses are offered in the Spring (hybrid) and Summer (online) semesters.

- SWK 3100 – Child Welfare and the Law
- SWK 3150 – Social Work and Child Maltreatment

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Professional Field Experience: In order to integrate classroom knowledge with practice and to experience the roles and requirements of a professional social worker, students complete a two-semester field placement (internship) during their senior year in the program. Stipend recipients are required to complete their field placement in a Colorado county department of human services for a minimum of 16 hours per week, 480 hours/year. Each semester is 15 weeks long.

BSSW stipend recipients must complete the same social work and non-social work pre-requisites and multicultural perspective requirements as all other social work majors.

MSW Stipend Recipients must follow the Children and Families pathway in the MSW Program.

Professional Field Experience: In order to integrate classroom knowledge with practice and to experience the roles and requirements of a professional social worker, students complete a two-semester field placement (internship) during both their foundation and concentration/advanced standing year(s). Stipend recipients are required to complete their field placement in a Colorado county department of human services for a minimum of 16 hours per week during their foundation year for a total of 480 hours/year. Each semester is 15 weeks long.

Concentration year stipend recipients will also complete their field placement in a county department of human services for a minimum of 20 hours per week for a total of 600 hours/year. Each semester is 15 weeks long.

## **Payment Information**

Stipend payments are provided through MSU Denver's Payroll Department and must be used to support the recipient's education expenses. Because of the work payback requirement, the child welfare stipend is subject to tax withholding based on the tax regulation regarding money awarded on the condition of providing services. This offers stipend recipients access to the most money and the most flexibility. Students will be required to fill out an employment packet provided by MSU Denver Human Resources (HR) before funds can be distributed. A W-4 is part of the HR packet which will affect how students are taxed when they receive a stipend. There are differing strategies on how this should be filled out. It is recommended students consult with a personal tax accountant.

The manner in which these funds will be paid out is subject to change and will be determined by MSU Denver.

## **Payback Requirements**

### **Work Requirements**

Stipend recipients agree to accept a paid position serving IV-E eligible children, youth and families in a Colorado county department of human services or Tribal child welfare agency following graduation. Stipend recipients commit to "rural" or "urban" county as part of the stipend process and agree to work a full year (12 months) for each year they received a stipend. Stipend recipients in the part-time program and receiving half of a stipend award commit to half of the work payback, if applicable.

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Stipend graduates have two months following graduation to secure employment in an urban or rural county of Colorado. If they do not secure employment in an urban county of Colorado during this period, they may be required to relocate to an urban county to fulfill the work payback requirements. Should a student fail to obtain employment within two months of graduation, they may be required to accept employment in a county chosen by the state.

If a graduate cannot locate a job within two months of graduation, payback may be delayed for up to one year, in increments up to three months, upon approval of the MSU Denver's child welfare team and the statewide Stipend Committee. The graduate must demonstrate efforts to secure employment within that year, participating in all offered interviews, and accepting employment, if offered.

### **Financial Repayment**

Students are required to repay the total amount of the stipend award, interest and any cost of collection under the following circumstances:

1. Failure to complete the social work program, child and family courses, within the normative period, except for hardship or disability. MSU Denver Social Work students are expected to graduate by the end of the summer term following their senior year (BSSW) and concentration year (MSW) in the social work program.
2. Failure to successfully complete the field placement, including the Child Welfare Fundamentals training, in a Colorado county child welfare setting serving IV-E eligible children, youth and families.
3. Failure to meet security clearance screens for work with children. These include, but are not limited to, background checks from: the C.B.I., Division of Records and Reports (Child Abuse Registry), F.B.I. for students who have been in Colorado less than 2 years, driving records, and any other background checks required by the county departments of social/human services to which the student applies for employment.
4. Failure to meet the legal requirements for employment within the USA as defined by 8 U.S.C. § 1324a.
5. Failure to accept employment in a Colorado urban or rural county child welfare position, depending on the stipend commitment which was made, serving IV-E eligible children and their families, within two months of graduation (unless a deferment for up to one year is granted).
6. Failure to gain employment in a Colorado county child welfare position serving IV-E eligible children and their families within one year of graduation, in spite of having participated in interviews.

### **Terms of Repayment**

Students who do not fulfill the terms of their agreement are responsible for the total or prorated award as described above, interest and collection costs. Terms of repayment will be negotiated with MSU Denver and the Stipend Committee. Collection procedures, should they be needed, will be undertaken by the State of Colorado, Central Collections Department.

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Students who have paid back part of their work requirement will pay a prorated amount under the following circumstances:

1. Voluntary termination of employment before completion of the work requirement (unless a hardship extension is granted).
2. Termination of employment before completion of the work requirement due to poor work or improper conduct.

### **Repayment Deferment**

Stipend students and graduates may request a deferment of work or financial repayment in three month increments for up to one year due to personal hardship or disability. Written requests must be approved by MSU Denver's child welfare team and/or CDHS and the Stipend Committee. Deferments may be extended for one additional year. At the end of the deferment period, the student must return and complete the work payback requirements or repay the amount of the award. Deferment may be granted to students and graduates in the following circumstances:

1. Delay of graduation due to personal hardship or disability.
2. Voluntary work interruption. The graduate must demonstrate their exploration of new employment that fits within the child welfare stipend requirements for payback.
3. Completion of graduate school. BSSW students may defer work payback if continuing on into the master of social work program with the commitment to continue in a public child welfare career in Colorado. Students who choose to continue their education in social work, may request a deferment based on their acceptance into the master of social work program. These MSW students are then eligible to apply for a child welfare stipend in the masters program. They must complete the program within two (2) years and follow the same payback terms as defined in this announcement.

### **Repayment Forgiveness**

Repayment forgiveness is at the sole discretion of the statewide Child Welfare Stipend Committee and requires a written request to the committee to initiate the forgiveness process. Waivers of repayment may be made in the case of permanent disability or death. Payback may also be waived in the event that county departments of human services do not have child welfare positions available due to hiring freezes or budget limitations.

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