



Colorado Child Welfare Scholars Consortium

Alumni Study Report

September 2023

Acknowledgements

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For more information, please visit the CCWSC website at www.msudenver.edu/ccwsc/ or contact the consortium at childwelfarescholars@msudenver.edu.

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Executive Summary

Established in 1995 as the Child Welfare Stipend Program, the CCWSC has awarded over 900 individual scholarships and stipends to both bachelors- and masters-level social work students over its almost 30-year history. In 2021, the Child Welfare Stipend Program was re-established as the Colorado Child Welfare Scholars Consortium (CCWSC), which aims to grow and support a well-educated and prepared child welfare workforce through social work education and post-graduation professional development and support. The program is a partnership between the Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS), county-based child welfare agencies and social work programs throughout Colorado, led by Metropolitan State University of Denver.

The Butler Institute at the University of Denver has consistently evaluated the CCWSC since 2015 and shared data to drive the program's growth and development with the CCWSC leadership team. Building on findings from a 2018 study, the current study was expanded to include all alumni, from 1997 to 2022. Email invitations were sent to 370 alumni, with anonymous survey links also posted in social media and list serves. More recent alumni, from 2017 to 2022, were invited to participate in focus groups. In total, the study's data sample included 190 survey responses and 20 focus group participants. The study explored CCWSC alumni's career pathways in child welfare, facilitators and barriers to career paths, and their organizational experiences in Colorado agencies. This report summarizes study findings and offers recommendations to promote CCWSC sustainability and future efforts for ongoing collaboration between Colorado universities and agencies to support the child welfare workforce.

Career Paths to and in Child Welfare Work

- 41% of survey respondents reported they were currently working at a Colorado child welfare agency (county, state, or other).
- Survey respondents reported working in Colorado child welfare for an average of 4.8 years after graduating. In total, they worked in child welfare for an average of 7.3 years (43% had previous child welfare work experience when they started receiving their stipend/scholarship).
- Those currently working in child welfare reported significantly longer time in child welfare work post-graduation (6.0 years), and in total years in child welfare work (8.7 years), than did alumni that have since stopped working in child welfare (3.8 years and 6.2 years, respectively).

Motivations for Pursuing Child Welfare Work

- Survey respondents reported a strong sense of their fit and self-efficacy with child welfare work, especially regarding their commitment to the well-being of

children and families, that they are motivated to find solutions when challenged in a case, and that their backgrounds make them a good fit.

- Themes around what brought alumni into child welfare work indicated that most alumni felt a connection through their lived experience, values, and passion/compassion for this work.

Professional Development and Supports

- In focus groups alumni spoke of receiving mostly informal coaching and mentoring in their agencies, but in some counties, coaching was prioritized for the professional development of newer workers. Alumni invested in themselves by advocating for their own professional development and utilizing their agency connections when support was limited.
- Regarding supports to pursue professional development interests, alumni noted that supervisor encouragement and county investment contributed to feelings of being valued. Several alumni described the support from their supervisors to pursue professional interests as instrumental to their development.
- Support around professional licensure for clinical social work (LCSW) was mixed among counties, particularly support tended to be harder to obtain in urban counties compared to rural ones.

Commitment to Child Welfare Work

- For respondents that had left child welfare work, themes related to their reasons for leaving included: high job stress and burnout due to high expectations regarding workload and hours, low salaries and lack of raises or promotion opportunities, and unsupportive organizational culture left alumni wanting a job change out of direct child welfare practice.
- Results of a regression analyses to understand variables that had the strongest relationships with *Intent to Stay* indicated that high sense of psychological safety within one's team and high satisfaction with one's job contributed greatly to alumni's sense of commitment to their current agency.
- Feeling supported was a central theme as an organizational factor to alumni's sense of commitment to the work, which included:
 - Positive peer, supervisor, and leadership experiences were key elements in alumni's feeling heard, trusted, and respected and for camaraderie.
 - Job security provided financial security but also feeling like work-life balance was supported and encouraged.
 - Job changes in child welfare work was key to feeling supported because they allowed for flexibility to address burnout or to find a better fit in different areas of the work.
 - Variety of child welfare work also offered career growth opportunities that supported several alumni's career interests.
- Strengths of commitment to work included the importance of having direct connection and finding meaning in the work; having personal values and lived

experiences that align with child welfare work; and feeling hopeful that they are part of a profession with a mission for positive change for families.

Summary and Recommendations

This mixed methods study of CCWSC alumni has provided insight into the career experiences of social workers working in Colorado child welfare agencies. Social work education funding is an important resource for child welfare professionals to increase their skills for practice with children and families and their professionalization and leadership in the workforce. CCWSC alumni stay longer in child welfare work after receiving their stipend/scholarship (4.8 years after graduating) and continue to serve in various positions in Colorado's county agencies and state office. This shows the strength and effectiveness of the social work scholarship/stipend as a recruitment practice for child welfare workers committed to serving children and families.

Key themes emerged in this study that showed the importance of personal values, connection through lived experiences, and passion/compassion for this work as key motivators to enter the profession and to give alumni hope, resilience, and strength to stay in the child welfare profession. Meanwhile, organizational supports were important to alumni's professional and career growth, which in turn strengthened their commitment to stay in the child welfare profession. Supervisors and mentors were important sources of encouragement for alumni to pursue professional development interests, which also let them feel valuable, in that their agency was invested in them. Alumni also identified ways that formalizing coaching and mentorship, as well as licensure support, could further contribute to supporting their career growth and commitment. Feeling heard, trusted, and respected, encouraged to have work-life balance, flexibility in the work to change jobs to address burnout, and having variety for career growth opportunities were all themes that alumni identified as important for strengthening their commitment to child welfare work.

Findings from this study along with the recommendations point to important pathways to retaining staff with the motivation, skills, and leadership for serving children and families in child welfare. The consortium itself is already a collaborative effort represented with Colorado's university social work programs, county agency staff, and CDHS staff. Each recommendation and strategy provided here are intended to increase opportunities for universities and child welfare agencies to strengthen retention and professional growth opportunities for the Colorado child welfare workforce.

Recommendations for the CCWSC

1. Explore ways to support LCSW supervision in county agencies.
 - Form an exploratory workgroup with extensive county representation.
 - Provide group and individual supervision to staff pursuing licensing.
 - Provide compensation to LCSW supervisors.
 - Create a network of LCSW supervisors and supervision support across county agencies.
2. Create a campaign to promote the value of social work education (BSW and MSW degrees, social work coursework) to county and tribal agencies, and the need to incentivize bringing social work-education staff into the workforce.
 - Disseminate findings from the current study to Colorado county directors and tribal child welfare program directors.
 - Disseminate findings via presentations and other materials at Title IV-E conference and other conferences for child welfare practitioners.
 - Share findings with Colorado lawmakers via the Executive Summary, report, and other materials that will be developed from the study.
3. Collaborate with agencies to improve post-graduation supports to alumni.
 - Develop ongoing professional development opportunities, such as formal mentoring and coaching, to tenured child welfare staff.
 - Continue to provide the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) to students and alumni and provide group coaching/mentoring sessions post-graduation.
 - Collaborate between CCWSC, county agencies, and CDHS to explore coaching training opportunities for alumni in supervision positions.
4. Build enhanced support for tenured child welfare staff to pursue Social Work degrees that will increase their practice and leadership skills while in their social work program.
 - Develop specialized field seminar courses at each University for currently working child welfare staff.
 - Provide opportunities for advanced specialization to attend conferences or virtual trainings in their interest areas.
5. Explore pathways to encourage CCWSC alumni connection to current social work scholars with fair compensation for alumni's time and efforts.
 - Provide professional development (speakers, preparation, training) to outgoing students and recent alumni to become internship supervisors.
 - Provide shadowing and mentoring opportunities for current students to be paired with alumni to learn professional development and career growth opportunities in the child welfare profession.

Recommendations for Colorado Child Welfare Agencies

6. Develop recognition and acknowledgement of the professionalization of child welfare staff who pursue MSW degrees and LCSW licensure.
 - Form a workgroup to explore career advancement (promotions, job positions) and compensation options for those that invest in MSW degrees and LCSW licensures.
 - Incentivize engagement and leadership in agency practice and workforce efforts with workload/caseload reductions, change in job responsibilities, and other ways to protect staff time.
 - Provide coaching and/or mentorship supports to child welfare staff interested in honing their expertise beyond casework to encourage their professional development and commitment for the child welfare profession.
7. Explore and implement resilience efforts to support child welfare staff, particularly for those experiencing trauma and burnout.
 - Explore trainings and practices offered from the [National Child Traumatic Stress Network](#) and the [California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse for Child Welfare](#).
 - Dedicate staff with expertise areas around trauma-informed and healing-centered practice to implement support and resilience practices with staff experiencing trauma and burnout.
 - Support and provide opportunities for staff exploring temporary job changes to continue in child welfare work without direct practice responsibilities.
 - Continue to encourage and support staff's professional development by increasing protections of staff time to participate in training and other activities to enable full engagement in these opportunities.

Recommendations for Future Study of CCWSC Alumni

8. Study career pathway differences in Colorado county agencies (e.g., what are opportunities for career pathway offered in urban counties and in rural counties?).
9. Develop a study further exploring sustainability practices unique to social work practitioners in child welfare (i.e., what keeps people hopeful in this work?).

Introduction

The Colorado Child Welfare Scholars Consortium (CCWSC) aims to grow and support a well-educated and prepared child welfare workforce through social work education and post-graduation professional development and support. The program is a partnership between the Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS), county-based child welfare agencies and social work programs throughout Colorado. The CCWSC is led by Metropolitan State University of Denver (MSU Denver) and currently includes partnerships with Colorado State University Pueblo (CSU Pueblo), University of Colorado, Colorado Springs (UCCS), and University of Denver (DU) social work programs.

Established in 1995 as the Child Welfare Stipend Program, the CCWSC has awarded over individual 900 scholarships and stipends to both bachelors- and masters-level social work students over its almost 30-year history. Participating universities have also included Colorado State University, Fort Collins. The CCWSC program planning and decision-making is supported by a statewide committee of the stakeholders previously mentioned. This group convenes on a regular basis to enhance programming, review scholar and agency needs and contribute to overall statewide recruitment and retention efforts.

The Consortium model officially launched on July 1st, 2021, to leverage federal resources for the program through a training provision of Title IV-E of the Social Security Act, created as part of the Child Welfare and Adoption Assistance Act of 1980 [P.L. 96-272]. Prior to this, the formerly known Child Welfare Stipend Program was supported by state-only funds. This model better positions the CCWSC to meet the CDHS Children and Family Service Plan (CFSP) goal to fund 80 scholars per academic year to help meet the child welfare workforce needs across Colorado. The program currently funds approximately 60 scholars each year, which infuses social work values and practices into Colorado's child welfare system.

CCWSC provides opportunities for child welfare scholars to gain knowledge and experience in child welfare and social work best practices. The program prepares scholars who are new to child welfare work to secure an entry-level position with county-based departments of human services. The program also supports those already working in child welfare to increase their knowledge and enhance their practice with children, youth, and families. Through a competitive application and interview process, select recipients across participating university programs (which include a mix of public and private universities) receive scholarships in amounts ranging from \$3,500-\$14,000 to help toward tuition costs for one academic year.

All program alumni that have received funding since 1995 were eligible to participate in this study. CCWSC program staff (past and present) were asked to review their alumni lists and provide current emails, if known. From the contact lists, 370 were

thought to have current emails and received an email invitation to participate in the survey. Social media campaigns were also utilized through DU GSSW, MSU Denver, and CDHS accounts with anonymous links to the study's survey. In addition, invites with anonymous links to the study's survey were also sent to CDHS and the Colorado Child Welfare Training Systems (CWTS) list serves. Meanwhile, alumni who graduated between 2017-2021 and still working in Colorado child welfare were invited to participate in focus groups. The qualitative study was intended to gather contextual experiences of recent CCWSC alumni working in county and state-level positions in Colorado child welfare agencies.

Study Information

Starting in early fall of 2022, researchers from the Butler Institute for Families, in collaboration with MSU Denver, proposed to conduct a study to track all CCWSC alumni and their career paths in child welfare work, with a focus on those who were currently working in Colorado child welfare agencies. The research study was designed to be mixed methods, with a quantitative survey sent first to all alumni in order to gather their career path information. Qualitative focus groups were initiated after the survey was sent to invite more recent alumni who were currently working in Colorado county-based child welfare agencies to gain more context on their career experiences and commitment to child welfare work. The study utilized the following research questions:

1. What are the career paths of scholars who received a child welfare stipend/scholarship from the program?
2. What have been facilitators and barriers for program alumni to build career paths in child welfare in Colorado? (career/professional development)
3. For alumni scholars working in child welfare, what are their organizational experiences in Colorado child welfare agencies? (supports, commitment to stay)

Methodology

The CCWSC alumni study used a mixed-methods design involving quantitative and qualitative components. Researchers sent links to the quantitative survey directly to program alumni with known valid email addresses, while social media posts and newsletters that publicized the survey contained an anonymous survey link. Focus groups were conducted with a targeted sample of recent alumni who graduated between 2017 and 2022.

Data Sources

Survey

Researchers received several lists of alumni with varying degrees of current contact information that were compiled to create the final survey contact list, including program graduates from MSU Denver between 1997-2022, DU GSSW from 2002-2009 and 2014-2022, CSU Pueblo from 2016-2022, and CSU Fort Collins from 2017-2021. The documents were filtered to create a list of alumni with current personal or work email addresses. For alumni with missing contact information, researchers reviewed a contact list from the Colorado Child Welfare Training System (CWTS) who indicated they were a child welfare “stipend recipient” in their Learning Management System (LMS) profile. Researchers then compared the LMS list with the list of alumni without contact information to capture those who may still be working in the state. To further expand the study’s reach, the survey was publicized on MSU Denver and DU GSSW’s social media channels, word of mouth, direct emails to alumni, and in various newsletters including the CCWSC Newsletter, CWTS Connection Newsletter, and the Colorado Office of Child, Youth, and Families Community Partner News.

The CCWSC alumni study survey was developed by researchers from the Butler Institute for Families and finalized in collaboration with CCWSC program partners. The survey was administered using Qualtrics Research Suite from April 4, 2023, through May 12, 2023, and included demographic questions, job history questions, one set of open-ended questions for those who had left the child welfare field, and open-ended questions and scale measures to better understand the organizational experiences of those who were still working in Colorado child welfare. Table 1 lists the scales organized by unit of analysis: individual, unit/office, and organizational. Incentives included a random drawing of \$15 Amazon.com gift cards to 110 participants after the survey closed.

Table 1. Survey Measures by Unit of Analysis

Individual Factors	Unit- / Office-Level Factors	Organizational Factors
Job Satisfaction	Peer Support	Organizational Climate
Intent to Stay	Supervisor Knowledge and Support	
Child Welfare Fit and Self-efficacy	Satisfaction With Supervision	
	Psychological Safety	

Researchers analyzed quantitative survey data using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS)[®]. Descriptive statistics are reported as frequencies (percentages); averages, or mean scores (*M*); and standard deviations (*SD*), which are an indicator of the extent to which scores spread out from the mean (low standard deviations indicate that scores clustered near the mean while high standard deviations indicate a greater range of responses). Items were typically rated on a 4-point scale (see Table 2 for rating scales, and Appendix A and B for mean scores and standard deviations at the item and scale levels for all of the survey measures).

Table 2. Response Options for Closed-Ended Items

Type of Scale	1	2	3	4	5
Agreement (4 points)	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	-
Agreement (5 points)	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Neither Agree nor Disagree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
Satisfaction	<i>Very Dissatisfied</i>	<i>Dissatisfied</i>	<i>Satisfied</i>	<i>Very Satisfied</i>	-
Accuracy	<i>Very Inaccurate</i>	<i>Somewhat Inaccurate</i>	<i>Somewhat Accurate</i>	<i>Very Accurate</i>	-

Focus Groups

Qualitative data was collected via focus groups. The eligibility protocol to participate in focus groups was limited to recent alumni who graduated between 2017-2022 and were currently working in Colorado child welfare. All 2017-2022 graduates were invited to participate and were instructed to sign up for one of four focus groups with a maximum room for 10 participants per focus group. The 20 alumni who participated

worked in various counties throughout Colorado, including Adams, Denver, Douglas, El Paso, Garfield, Jefferson, Larimer, Mesa, Montezuma, and Weld.

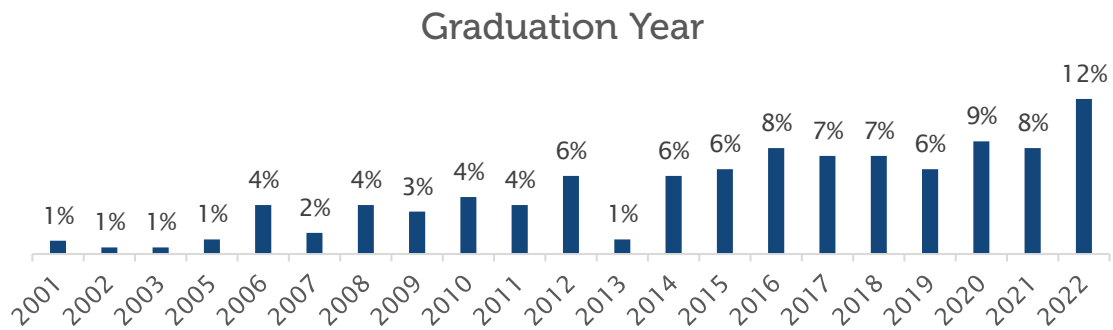
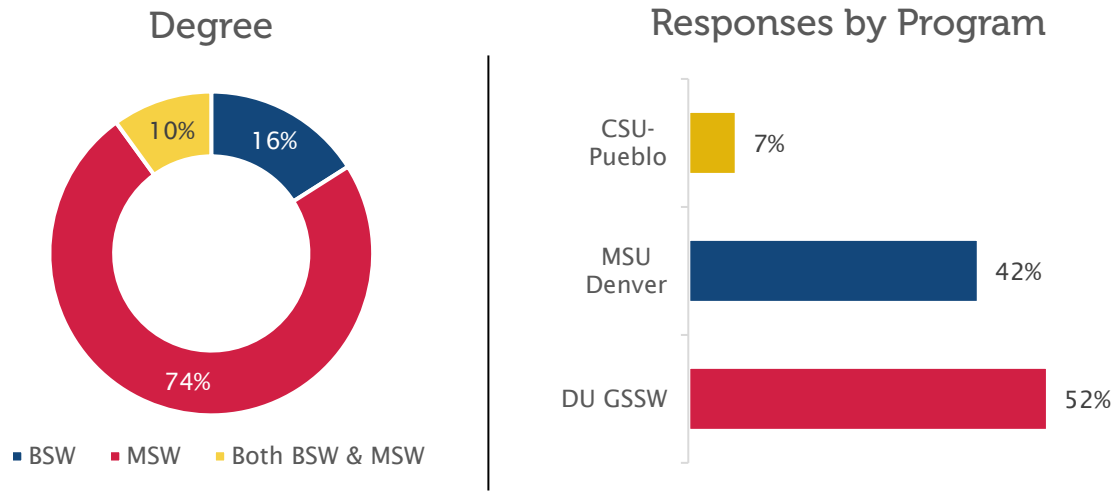
Focus group questions collected information on factors that led alumni to child welfare, child welfare job history, factors that facilitated or challenged their intention to stay in the field, and professional development goals (see Appendix D for a copy of the focus group protocol). All focus groups lasted about 1.5 hours and were conducted via Zoom. Participants were emailed \$20 Amazon.com gift cards after participating. Researchers recorded focus groups, and audio files were professionally transcribed with identifying information removed. Research team members coded focus group transcripts in NVivo (©2022), a qualitative analysis software.

Participants

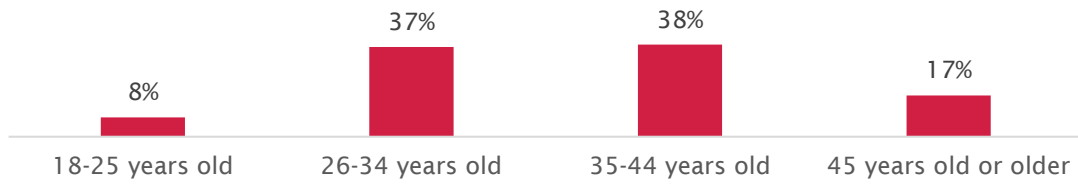
In total, 370 alumni with current email addresses were invited to participate in the survey, and 171 responded. There were an additional 19 responses from those who took the survey via the publicized anonymous link for a total of 190 responses.

Of the respondents who participated in this study, 74% earned an MSW with their child welfare scholarship/stipend, and most attended DU GSSW and MSU Denver (93%). Graduation years ranged from 2001 to 2022, with an average year of 2015 and median year of 2016. About 43% of alumni were working in child welfare while receiving funding for their social work program. Eighty-five percent of alumni were in the process of fulfilling or had completed their work requirement, 11% chose to pay back the funding they received, less than 1% were in deferment, and 4% indicated they had other repayment statuses. Other repayment statuses included completing most of the requirement but paying back a few months. Most respondents identified as female (92%); 68% identified as White, 17% Latinx, 6% Black, 4% multiracial, and 4% as other. The average age of respondents was 35 years old. See Figure 1 for participant demographics.

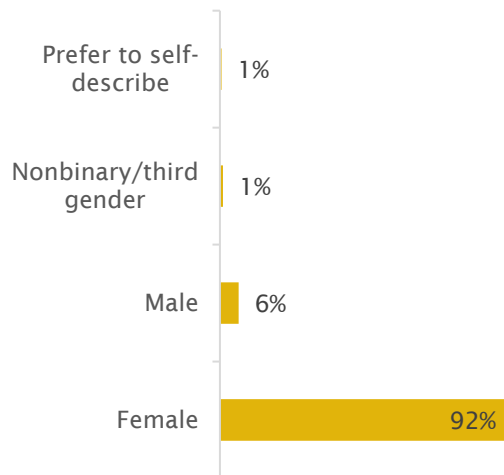
Figure 1. Participant Demographics ($n = 185-190$)



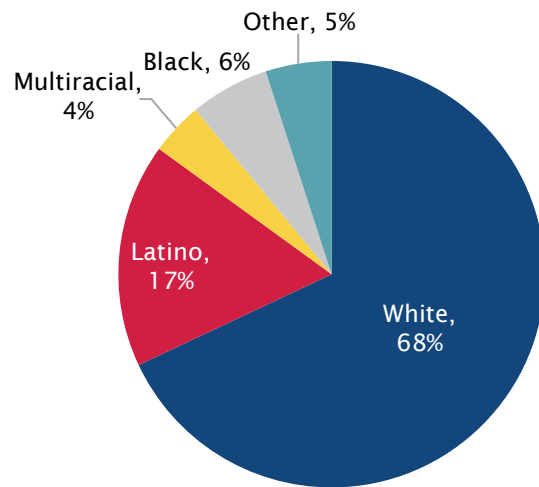
Age



Gender



Ethnicity



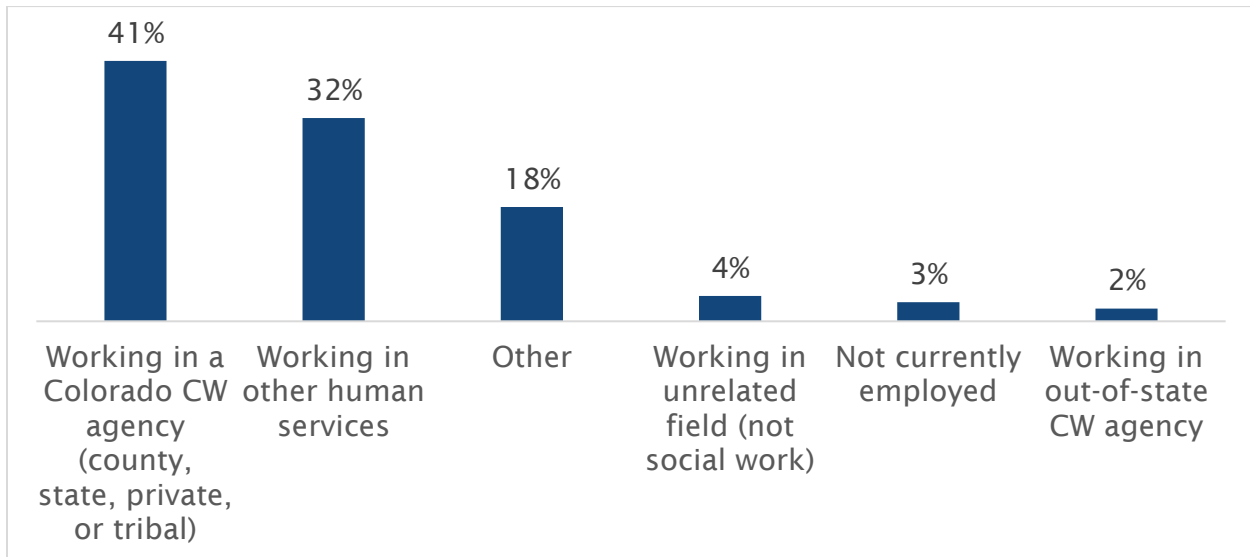
Findings

The following section presents findings from the 2023 CCWSC alumni study. Results are reported in aggregate and quotations are not identified for the protection of confidentiality of the study’s participants. This study, including protocols and measures, was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of University of Denver.

Career Paths to and in Child Welfare Work

Of the 190 survey respondents, the median graduation year from their degree program while receiving the child welfare scholarship was 2016, with the earliest alumni graduating in 2001 and the latest in 2022. As seen in Figure 2, 41% of survey respondents were currently working in a Colorado child welfare agency while 32% were working in other human services professional fields. Of the 18% “Other” responses, alumni indicated they were in other social work fields (e.g., most often in school social work or hospital social work), working as therapists, or working in other professional areas.

Figure 2. Current Job Status for Survey Respondents ($n = 190$)



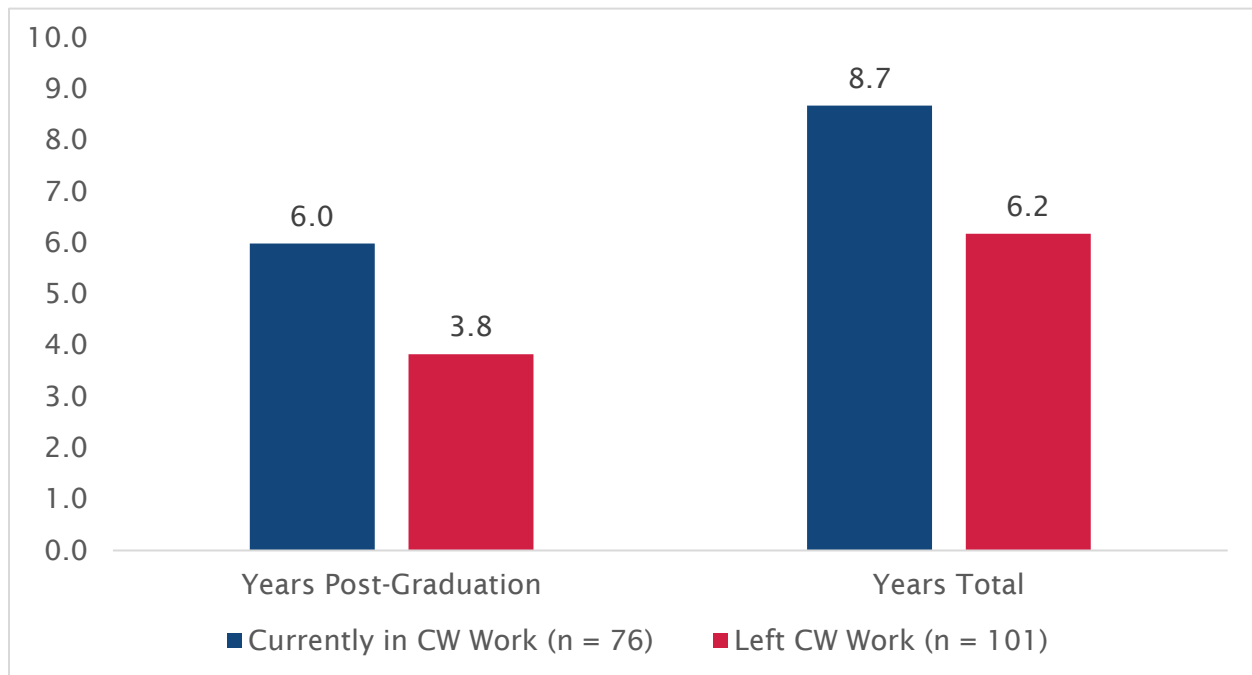
Longevity in Field

To track alumni’s career trajectories after they graduated from their degree program, survey participants were asked the number of years they worked in child welfare post-graduation, the total number of years they worked in child welfare overall (as some worked in the field before returning to school or while they were earning their degree), as well as the number of job positions and agencies since graduation.

Survey respondents reported that they **stayed in Colorado child welfare work for an average of 4.8 years after graduating with their social work degree**. This longevity in the field is a similar finding to the 2018 study of CCWSC alumni, which focused on those that graduated between 2006 and 2018. In that study, the average number of years that alumni worked in child welfare after graduating was 3.97 years.¹ While receiving their stipend, 43% of the 2023 survey respondents entered their social work program with previous child welfare work experience and, on average, worked 7.3 years total in child welfare work. In that time, they worked in an average of 1.5 agencies and changed job positions an average of 2.4 times.

Comparisons using independent samples *t*-tests indicated that those currently working in child welfare reported significantly longer time in child welfare work post-graduation, $t(176) = 3.19$ and in total years in child welfare work, $t(175) = 2.84$ than did alumni that have since stopped working in child welfare ($p < .01$ for both tests); see Figure 3.

Figure 3. Differences in Years in Child Welfare Work for Alumni Currently in Child Welfare and Alumni Who Left



Among all survey respondents, the total number of child welfare agencies that alumni worked in ranged from one to five and the number of child welfare positions held

¹ Butler Institute for Families. (2018). Colorado Title IV-E Stipend: Findings from the 2018 Stipend Graduates Study. Denver: CO: Author.

ranged from one to six. The number of Colorado county offices that they had worked in ranged from one to four, with an average of 1.3. About 10% of alumni reported having worked for the CDHS state office. A comparison between participants remaining in the child welfare field and participants no longer in the child welfare field suggested that **those remaining in child welfare were more likely to have remained with one agency**. Specifically, 79% of participants remaining in the child welfare field reported they had worked within one agency, whereas only 52% of participants no longer in the field reported working within one agency. The majority of survey respondents, 92%, indicated that they worked or currently working in a public (county or state) agency, and 7% indicated that they worked or currently working in a private agency.

Alumni currently working in child welfare reported a higher average number of different job positions held in their child welfare career (2.57) compared to participants not working in child welfare (2.09). Among all survey respondents, 22% started with support positions in child welfare agencies. In addition, 23% are currently in or have held supervisor positions and 10% are currently in or have held manager or director positions at county or state offices. Alumni that are currently working in child welfare were more likely to have held job positions higher than caseworker level than those who are no longer working in child welfare, including positions such as supervisor, manager, county director, state manager/administrator, etc.

Motivations for Pursuing Child Welfare Work

From the survey, alumni reported a high level of *Child Welfare Fit and Self-Efficacy* ($M = 4.4$, $SD = 0.4$). Strengths in this measure indicated that alumni had a strong sense of their fit and self-efficacy with child welfare work, especially regarding their commitment to the well-being of children and families, that they are motivated to find solutions when challenged in a case, and that their backgrounds make them a good fit.

Themes around **what brought alumni into child welfare work indicated that most alumni felt a connection through their lived experience, values, and passion/compassion for this work** (see Table 3). Some alumni also noted that their scholarship experience contributed to their work, that they *“ended up just very much falling in love with working with this population and found a really kind of niche internship of doing child protection therapy.”* For others, in addition to feeling they have a fit with child welfare work, they noted that the variety of types of positions were also strong motivating factors to choose child welfare work. For example, one alum noted that *“even though I've been in this position for almost 2 years, I don't think I'll ever get to a place that I feel like I fully know everything or I know every aspect just because every family is so different and even if it's similar in that there's substance use concerns or mental health concerns or whatever that may be, every single case is different and every outcome is different in the courts and things like that.”*

Table 3. Motivations to Enter Child Welfare Work

Theme	Example Quotes
<p>Lived experience with system led to desire to work in child welfare.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“The personal connection historically with my family, I think, helps me know and feel like I’m in the right place. It drives me to continue so that I can try to be on the opposite end, and that helps me connect with, I think, the families and kids a little bit more.”</i> • <i>“My family also was involved with DHS when I was younger ... So I think that kind of opened the door to what that would look like for me ... That’s why I chose social work in general, but I think I always knew primarily where I wanted to start my career at when I graduated with my degree, and that was in the child welfare field.”</i> • <i>“I ended up taking classes and loving my professors and realizing, ‘Oh, child welfare is a passion of mine.’ With having some background of my own in child welfare, I thought, ‘Oh, this would be a cool career field to be able to maybe relate to some clients of mine.’”</i>
<p>Alumni felt their values and passion aligned with child welfare work.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Having that added compassion and empathy mixed with a really firm accountability has made working in child welfare and working as a therapist in child welfare a good fit for me.</i> • <i>“I think all through my studies, I knew child welfare or just children, in general, was a strong value for me. I knew it was a field I wanted to work in, but I just didn’t know what [part of the field] exactly. When I did my internship, it was with intake. Unfortunately, I knew right there and then intake was not what I wanted to do. But at the same time, I did see other departments, and I saw these are some other things I could do.”</i>
<p>Variety in the work allows for exploration and learning fit in the work.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“I worked in four different counties, so I’ve got a broad experience in casework, so I did my master’s later on. It was super supportive to have already been integrated into child welfare and then to just branch off in different directions doing my internship.”</i> • <i>“Every day is different. You can’t really predict too much. I enjoy that there’s a lot of flexibility in what my days can look like, and then I’m never bored.”</i>

Professional Development and Supports

During the focus groups and through open-ended survey feedback, alumni discussed the factors that helped to facilitate building careers in Colorado child welfare and the barriers they have encountered along the way. Themes centered around the availability of formal and informal professional supports and how those supports strengthen commitment to child welfare.

Coaching and Mentoring Supports for Professional Development

Alumni spoke about receiving both formal and informal coaching and mentoring in their agencies. In some counties, coaches are available, but they typically prioritize the professional development of newer workers. According to one alum, *“Since we constantly have newer people, those coaches are busy with them.”* As a result, tenured staff and those in specialized roles seek out informal mentoring from *“people within my agency that I really admire and respect.”* Mentorship was primarily found in individual supervision (*“I had a supervisor that her philosophy on being a supervisor incorporated a lot of coaching.”*), group supervision (*“In group supervision, we staff cases... So I think just supporting one another in case challenges is a mentoring opportunity, too, when challenges come up that are case specific.”*), and experienced workers who offered *pro bono* mentorship (*“There are a lot of people with a lot of experience that are willing to have you shadow or learn from them or be supervised by them, and coached.”*).

Investment in Professional Development Interests

Regarding supports to pursue professional development interests, **alumni noted that supervisor encouragement and county investment contributed to feelings of being valued.** For example, some counties offered a yearly tuition reimbursement, *“so we could take a class at a community college or they help pay for my master's through that.”* Several alumni mentioned the availability of training opportunities: *“There is a lot of opportunity for additional trainings through CWTS, through PESI, through a bunch of different ways that the county supports us in getting that professional development that could be applicable long term if you wanted to change areas.”* However, workloads made it difficult for some to find the time to attend trainings in a present, engaged way: *“I'm so overworked that I'm doing a court report while I'm listening to training. I'm doing this. I'm doing that. I'm setting up services. I'm not investing in the training. I'm not getting all I could from it.”* Some also mentioned joining workgroups to explore other interests while remaining in their current roles in order to enhance their professional growth.

Others described the support from their supervisors to pursue professional interests as instrumental to their development. One alum shared a story about how her former

supervisor and director encouraged her to apply for a position. Although she was hesitant, she applied and through her new position discovered her passion for working with adolescents. According to her, *“I guess I wouldn't have found it otherwise if they wouldn't have encouraged that.”* The following is another exemplary quote of this sentiment:

“And now allowing myself that time, being able to set that next goal and then having a supervisor, a team, a county that supports professional development so that I can now hone in on different specialties of what I want to practice within my therapeutic role and specialties that would be humongously effective within child welfare.”

“You just have to advocate for yourself and have different layers of how you access support.”

Additionally, **alumni invested in themselves by advocating for their own professional development and utilizing their agency connections when support was limited.** This was viewed by alumni as both a resilient strength, but also as a necessary act to take control of their growth. For one alum, the training coordinator at their agency did not have the capacity to supervise their LCSW clinical hours, but through their connections, they were able to find a supervisor who

offered to supervise her hours for free. Another alum had issues obtaining financial support from her department to attend a conference but was able to secure funding through a different department. Reflecting on their experiences in pursuing their specialized professional interests, the alum stated, *“It feels like to get any support around me furthering that interest is like pulling teeth.”*

Support around professional licensure for clinical social work (LCSW) was mixed among counties. Support tended to be harder to obtain in urban (big) counties compared to rural (small) ones. Supports in pursuing licensure included the availability of free individual or group supervision, financial incentives (i.e., salary

“[The director said], ‘LCSWs here at the department need to be valued. We need to give them group supervision.’ So, my thought process was to leave when I get my LCSW, but if I could stay here and still be valued as an LCSW, then I would stay.”

“So, I think they preach that they want to support you in big counties but then don't have the bandwidth to even think about how to get you to that next step.”

increase), and mentorship opportunities. On the other hand, barriers included the limited number of LCSW supervisors, the financial burden of paying for supervision, no pay increases, and limited career paths for staff with LCSWs.

Additionally, *perceptions* of investment in professional development differed between rural and urban counties. When asked why her current agency was more supportive of her professional development compared to her former agency, one alum shared, *“I think the leadership here knows who I am and my interests. In the larger county [agency], I felt like just a number and was not asked what my goals were.”* Others echoed this sentiment and suggested that urban counties lack the *“infrastructure to support goals... It's not because they have poor intentions. They want to do all the things to support their staff; they just don't have the people.”*

Ultimately, interest and investment in their professional development cultivated feelings of being valued by their agency and contributed to alumni investment in the field. As explained by one alum:

“I do feel in all the other roles I've had within my county that it does matter that I feel fulfilled and engaged with my work. That matters to upper management, and that is encouraged.”

Furthermore, when agencies support professional interests, alumni can pursue projects that allow them to strengthen practice and implement creative solutions. For example, one alum mentioned advocating to attend a training that would expand their practice skills. Although it took some convincing, the alum believes their supervisor is *“happy that I did it because it helped me stay around longer.”* Other factors that contribute to retention are explored in the [Commitment to Child Welfare Work section](#).

Commitment to Child Welfare Work

A key aspect explored in this study concerned alumni commitment to child welfare work. Alumni had received scholarships for their social work education and were required to work in a Colorado county department of human services in direct practice with families for at least one year for each stipend or scholarship that was received. This is a typical requirement for Title IV-E programs nationwide. Findings for commitment to child welfare work were centered around topics related to reasons why alumni left child welfare work, organizational factors for intent to stay, and building motivation and resilience to stay.

Alumni Who Left Child Welfare Work

As noted previously in the report, 59% of survey respondents were no longer working in child welfare work positions in Colorado. An open-ended survey question asked

these alumni why they left. Most alumni shared reasons that fell into themes of issues with work conditions and organizational culture. As shown in Table 4, alumni most often cited experiencing high job stress and burnout as particularly difficult areas of work conditions. Another area of work conditions that alumni struggled with included both low salaries and lack of raises and promotion opportunities. For organizational culture and climate, alumni who left child welfare work felt they were unsupported by supervisors and leadership in the agency.

Table 4. Themes and Quotes of Why Alumni Left Child Welfare Work

Theme	Example Quotes
<p>Alumni could not manage the high levels of job stress and burnout due to high expectations regarding workload and hours.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“The county was overburdened and understaffed. I was on-call for 15 days out of the month while pursuing my MSW and rehabbing from an injury...”</i> • <i>“I ended up being the only person on my team because everyone had resigned. My caseload doubled overnight, and my supervisor wasn't willing to take on any cases or responsibilities.”</i>
<p>Low salaries and lack of raises or promotion opportunities led alumni to look for work elsewhere.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“I became a licensed clinical social worker, and there was no pay increase or recognition.”</i> • <i>“I left child welfare because the pay in this field is no longer enough to live in [removed for confidentiality] county. The child welfare field has not kept up regarding compensation when compared to other human service fields.”</i>
<p>Unsupportive organizational culture left alumni wanting a job change out of direct child welfare practice.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“[There was] not enough support for teams and staff, not enough discussion around inequality between staff members and inequality surrounding clients and their situations.”</i> • <i>“The work environment was difficult, and BIPOC employees were treated poorly and discriminated against. For my own health and well-being, I chose to leave...”</i>

Another theme that arose from alumni's responses to why they left child welfare work concerned experiencing moral distress in the job, (i.e., they could not reconcile the policies behind decisions that impacted families.) Alumni described that the *"administration's agenda, vision, and behavior no longer aligned with my professional and personal values,"* that child welfare *"has so many policies/rules that it is difficult to be proactive and create realistic and meaningful change that makes sense for the community members who are served"* and that *"I had difficulty finding my ethical balance of keeping children safe while meeting the guidelines of the child welfare mandates."* There were many other examples from the open-ended survey responses that pointed to being unable to reconcile policies regarding decision-making and support given to families involved in child welfare, though they appreciated their skills and experiences they gained while working in child welfare. As one survey participant shared,

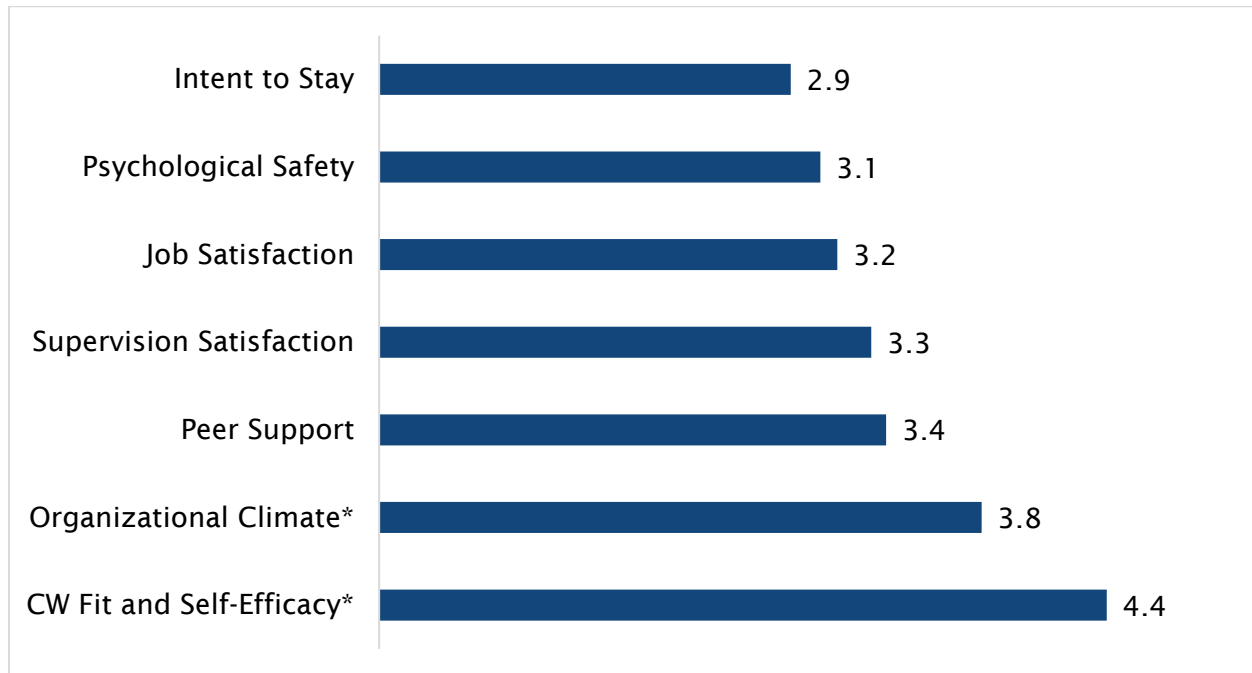
"I decided that if being supportive and building rapport with families in order to have them engage in treatment at the worst time of their lives was not important or seen as excessive, then I was in the wrong area of social work practice. I value the time I had in DHS, honing my assessment skills and building confidence in those assessments and my interactions with families."

In another survey question, alumni who left were asked if they would consider returning to child welfare work. Most alumni indicated that they were not considering returning due to the high stress of the work and/or because they have found other work and careers that are a better fit. For those who considered returning, they indicated that they would like to return to working directly with children and families (but not in a casework role) or to return to a macro social work position.

Organizational Factors for Intent to Stay

Several sections in the survey were specific only to those who were currently working in Colorado child welfare agencies (41% of survey respondents) in order to gain their perspectives on their work environment, their fit and self-efficacy for child welfare work, and their intent to stay in their current agency. As seen in Figure 4, these alumni reported high, positive perceptions of organizational climate, psychological safety, peer support, and supervision satisfaction. In addition, alumni reported high job satisfaction and fit and self-efficacy with child welfare work. However, alumni were less likely to endorse intent to stay in their current agency. Descriptives across items for each measure are reported in Appendix B.

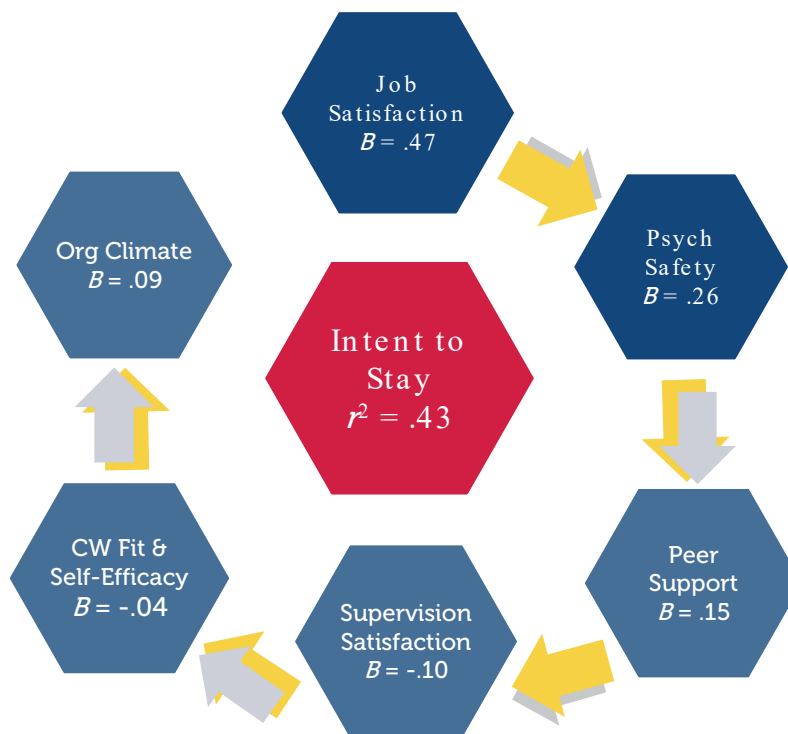
Figure 4. Average Ratings Across Scales



*Scales are measured on a 5-point rating scale; all others are 4-point rating scales.

For alumni currently working in child welfare, responses to Intent to Stay items indicated that **77% were committed to staying with their child welfare agencies, and 73% felt they would still be working at these agencies in 5 years.** A regression analysis looked at the variables with the strongest relationships with *Intent to Stay*. Results indicated a strong model of supportive factors related to *Intent to Stay*, $r^2 = .43$, with *Psychological Safety* and *Job Satisfaction* as significant predictors at $p < .01$ (see Figure 5). These results indicate that **high sense of psychological safety within one's team and high satisfaction with one's job contributed greatly to alumni's sense of commitment to the agency.** Key areas of psychological safety included how alumni felt that they could bring up problems and tough issues within their team (88% accurate) and how they felt it was easy to ask team members for help (88% accurate). Meanwhile, for job satisfaction, **alumni agreed that they were proud of the work they do (99%) and that they have a feeling of success and accomplishment in their job (97%).**

Figure 5. Regression Analyses With Intent to Stay ($n = 66$)*



*Significant predictors are in **bold**; Model is significant, $F(6,59) = 7.37, p \leq .001$

The Importance of Feeling Supported

Where psychological safety was an important factor for commitment in the quantitative data, the theme of feeling supported was a central theme in the qualitative data as an organizational factor to alumni's sense of commitment to the work. Alumni were asked in the survey and focus groups about their commitment to child welfare work ("Do you see yourself having a long career in child welfare? Why or why not?" and "What have been the strongest influences towards your commitment to working in child welfare?"). Again and again, alumni identified **organizational factors** that were key towards their commitment, that "your ability to stay in a job, I think, is largely reflected by your work environment ... when it wasn't positive, then I didn't stay there long and wasn't able to stay there long. But I think with good supervisors and good work environment and things like that, that really is, I think, what helps people and what helps me specifically to stay in this job." Many other sub-themes connected to the sense of **feeling supported**, as identified by alumni, and these sub-themes identify all the ways that "feeling supported" is sustained as shown in Figure 6. Alumni also felt that the

sense of feeling supported came **from the organization itself**, as well as **specifically from peers and supervisors**.

Figure 6. Feeling Supported and Sub-Themes



Positive peer, supervisor, and leadership experiences were key elements in alumni’s feeling heard, trusted, and respected and with providing camaraderie.

One alum described that *“having a supervisor who's really supportive of my decisions helps my personal growth; I feel like that's a huge piece of”* staying in the job. From another alum’s perspective, they felt their role as a supervisor was *“about supporting my staff, helping keep them in the career or support them in the career direction they want to go, helping them grow.”* Meanwhile, another alum described the importance of camaraderie, in that *“the team building ... is extremely important to build that camaraderie but also to build that ... togetherness of present. We want to all prevent child abuse and neglect.”*

Other organizational factors including job security and work-life balance were also key elements in supporting alumni’s sense of feeling supported to stay in the job. Alumni

noted that job security was an important factor, to help them feel they have financial means such that, *“I feel like I am being compensated well for my time with my pay and my benefits, comparatively with other social workers. Unfortunately, not with other people with a master’s degree”* and that *“job stability and a consistent paycheck that supports my lifestyle and my goals outside of work is huge.”* Meanwhile, work-life balance was an important counterpart to that job security, because many alumni considered that *“organizationally, that's a huge piece of [commitment], just how your*

“I was a caseworker for 2 years in ongoing and then ... switched over to the therapeutic team and I was burnt to a crisp at that point ... And truly it was just through support that got me, that was the good fit for me as a caseworker ... that I have been able to work myself into a position where I do have consistent days.”

organization runs. For me, there isn't an expectation to work on nights and weekends unless it's absolutely necessary. [That] promotes a positive culture and a healthy work-life balance."

Alumni also discussed the importance of variety in child welfare work, which has already been discussed as an important motivator into the professional field. But **having variety in child welfare work also became important to alumni feeling supported because job changes allowed for flexibility to address burnout or to find a better fit in different areas of the work.** One alum felt that *"it's easy to get burnout on traditional casework" and that changing positions "would just be needing maybe a different change within child welfare and ... something that maybe feels a little bit more like positive. I don't know if that's the word, but just shifting within child welfare to a different part of it for a change up."* For another alum, a job switch was necessary due to a personal change (starting a family) but especially because *"it's a lot of crisis every week, it feels like. I would be open to "staying in a role that's case carrying, but maybe something like less crisis" and so a change from intake to ongoing "was definitely helpful in achieving work-life balance."* Meanwhile, another alum shared that they switched from ongoing to intake where they felt they *"excelled there"* to the point where *"I got promoted to being the lead intake worker here and then promoted to being a supervisor. So, it's been a good journey. I feel like, when you know what you do well and you can advocate for that and then agencies see that is where you do well and can utilize your skills in that area, it's just pretty reassuring and makes you feel supported; you want to stay and keep growing."*

While the variety in child welfare work offered a lot of temporary relief towards helping manage burnout and to find fit to develop professionally, **variety of child welfare work also offered career growth opportunities that supported several alumni's career interests.** One alum shared that *"one of the things I really love about child welfare is there's opportunity for movement within different agencies ... at the state. I feel like there's just a lot that you can change, and I appreciate that."* Another alum described that in child welfare work, *"there are just so many opportunities to grow personally and professionally and to find the different areas I'm most passionate about. But I think where I'm at now, because I've had those previous opportunities to move around and have different positions within child welfare, and just really passionate about continuing to support county supervisors, case workers, support of the whole system, that's why I stay."*

Strengths of Commitment to Child Welfare Work

“Just having the fulfillment of the job itself ... just having small wins and big ones throughout every case.”

Responses indicated the importance of direct connection and meaning to the work e.g., job satisfaction, which aligns with the report’s quantitative findings. Many alumni valued the sense of fulfillment they received from their work because *“working with those families, seeing the progress, seeing the difference we can make by supporting these families and making these changes was pretty inspiring. It kept me going to work every day and wanting to keep kids in our community safe.”* Another alum shared, *“I honestly do love working with the clients and people, and I feel like this is where I belong. My position now does not afford me very much one-on-one client contact, but when I do get that, that is something I enjoy.”*

Another key foundational piece to strengthening job commitment included the **personal values, connections (i.e., lived experiences), and pride taken in social work practice with children and families in child welfare.** These factors not only led alumni into child welfare work (see [Motivations for Pursuing Child Welfare Work section](#)) but are also important strengths to maintain when the work is difficult. For one alum, they took pride in the value they bring: *“My personal reasons why I stay in child welfare is that I definitely see a need for caseworkers like me who are Spanish speaking.”* For another alum, *“I was in foster care as a youth as well, so that's also what drove me this direction, once I ... realized I could be impacting this field. I think I had a lot of bitterness toward it for a long time, so it took me a while to come around.”* Another alum expressed how a strength of committing to the work impacts change at the macro level as well:

“I think what's shifted towards my commitment is being a supervisor the last few years; I've seen a lot of systemic failures, which is also why ... I want to make a bigger systemic impact because there are a lot of things that are set up that could be done a lot differently where we could be impacting families quicker ... So. I'm really excited to continue to push the wheel along and make things better for the people who are doing the direct work.”

Building Motivation and Resilience to Stay

While alumni have shared what contributes to their commitment to the work, they were also asked, “What goals, activities and/or practices help build your sense of hope and sustain you in your child welfare career?” Responses indicated important relationships of micro social work building motivation for their day-to-day motivation, while taking a

long-term view and holding a macro perspective contributed to their resilience for staying in child welfare work.

Many alumni noted that the rewards of helping families was important to building motivation, particularly when combined with shifting their lens to look at big wins and little wins. One alum described “. *Something that gives me a ton of hope is when a family can acknowledge concerns in their home ... I know that's not something that we can just implement ... but that's something that makes me feel really hopeful for a family.*” Another alum noted that “*people come into this job thinking they're going to make the difference and be the change, and then they see that's not always possible. I think that that can be disheartening and lead to a lack of hope. So, I think it's really important to have a really healthy balance and perspective about what hope is for any given family and how to measure that for each individual family.*”

Alumni also emphasized the importance of a macro perspective to sustain them in child welfare work. Alumni described ways that system-wide efforts make a difference, from when families are engaged and involved as experts in guiding practice to when community partners, including attorneys, are involved as collaborative partners. One alum shared that “*amazing foster parents or amazing attorneys or amazing service providers are able to collaborate with us in a way that makes things move forward faster and more smoothly.*” **Alumni felt particularly hopeful that they are part of a profession with a mission towards positive change for families because of how that aligns with their personal values.** For example, one alum shared that how “*that resonates with me is ... bigger picture stuff, knowing that our system is far from perfect but still understanding what we are doing to move forward because it is so easy to get bogged down with day-to-day case stuff. I think the lens of your organization and the vision of your organization is huge, too, in maintaining hope in our field.*” Finally, another alum described what makes them hopeful is that “*our system, even though it's moving slowly, is moving in this direction that wants to prevent opening cases, that wants to prevent families from getting involved in our system, that wants to prevent abuse and neglect from happening. I think that when you're doing so much casework and it's so nitty-gritty and you're really stuck in that, for me it helps to find hope in working on some of the bigger picture stuff and focusing on that as well.*”

Summary

This mixed methods study of CCWSC alumni has provided insight into the career experiences of social workers working in Colorado child welfare agencies. Similar to a finding from the 2018 study of CCWSC alumni, we know that alumni are staying longer in child welfare work after receiving their stipend/scholarship. From the current study, alumni reported an average of 4.8 years after graduating, which is well past their period of fulfilling employment obligations for having received their stipend/scholarship. This finding alone shows the strength and effectiveness of the social work scholarship/stipend as a recruitment practice for child welfare workers committed to serving children and families.

In this study, several themes emerged around how CCWSC alumni were motivated to pursuing child welfare work, what supports were available to them for their professional and career growth, and what factors were important for motivating and strengthening their commitment to stay in child welfare work. Personal values, connection through lived experiences, and passion/compassion for this work were key motivators for alumni to get into the child welfare profession. These same motivators showed again when alumni discussed what gave them hope, resilience, and strength to stay in the child welfare profession.

Meanwhile, key themes emerged that showed the importance of organizational supports that contributed to alumni's professional and career growth, which in turn strengthened their commitment to stay in the child welfare profession. Supervisors and mentors were important sources of encouragement for alumni to pursue professional development interests, which also let them feel valuable, in that their agency was invested in them. Alumni also identified ways that formalizing coaching and mentorship, as well as licensure support, could further contribute to supporting their career growth and commitment. Feeling heard, trusted, and respected, encouraged to have work-life balance, flexibility in the work to change jobs to address burnout, and having variety for career growth opportunities were all themes that alumni identified as important for strengthening their commitment to child welfare work.

Recommendations

Recommendations are provided to continue the strong work that the Colorado Child Welfare Scholars Consortium has contributed to the Colorado child welfare workforce. Findings from this study along with the recommendations below point to important pathways to retaining staff with the motivation, skills, and leadership for serving children and families in child welfare. The consortium itself is already a collaborative effort represented with Colorado's university social work programs, county agency staff, and CDHS staff. Each recommendation and strategy provided here are intended to increase opportunities for universities and child welfare agencies to strengthen

retention and professional growth opportunities for the Colorado child welfare workforce.

Recommendations for the CCWSC

1. Explore ways to support LCSW supervision in county agencies.
 - Form an exploratory workgroup with extensive county representation.
 - Provide group and individual supervision to staff pursuing licensing.
 - Provide compensation to LCSW supervisors.
 - Create a network of LCSW supervisors and supervision support across county agencies.
2. Create a campaign to promote the value of social work education (BSW and MSW degrees, social work coursework) to county and tribal agencies, and the need to incentivize bringing social work-education staff into the workforce.
 - Disseminate findings from the current study to Colorado county directors and tribal child welfare program directors.
 - Disseminate findings via presentations and other materials at Title IV-E conference and other conferences for child welfare practitioners.
 - Share findings with Colorado lawmakers via the Executive Summary, report, and other materials that will be developed from the study.
3. Collaborate with agencies to improve post-graduation supports to alumni.
 - Develop ongoing professional development opportunities, such as formal mentoring and coaching, to tenured child welfare staff.
 - Continue to provide the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) to students and alumni and provide group coaching/mentoring sessions post-graduation.
 - Collaborate between CCWSC, county agencies, and CDHS to explore coaching training opportunities for alumni in supervision positions.
4. Build enhanced support for tenured child welfare staff to pursue Social Work degrees that will increase their practice and leadership skills while in their social work program.
 - Develop specialized field seminar courses at each University for currently working child welfare staff.
 - Provide opportunities for advanced specialization to attend conferences or virtual trainings in their interest areas.
5. Explore pathways to encourage CCWSC alumni connection to current social work scholars with fair compensation for alumni's time and efforts.
 - Provide professional development (speakers, preparation, training) to outgoing students and recent alumni to become internship supervisors.

- Provide shadowing and mentoring opportunities for current students to be paired with alumni to learn professional development and career growth opportunities in the child welfare profession.

Recommendations for Colorado Child Welfare Agencies

6. Develop recognition and acknowledgement of the professionalization of child welfare staff who pursue MSW degrees and LCSW licensure.
 - Form a workgroup to explore career advancement (promotions, job positions) and compensation options for those that invest in MSW degrees and LCSW licensures.
 - Incentivize engagement and leadership in agency practice and workforce efforts with workload/caseload reductions, change in job responsibilities, and other ways to protect staff time.
 - Provide coaching and/or mentorship supports to child welfare staff interested in honing their expertise beyond casework to encourage their professional development and commitment for the child welfare profession.
7. Explore and implement resilience efforts to support child welfare staff, particularly for those experiencing trauma and burnout.
 - Explore trainings and practices offered from the [National Child Traumatic Stress Network](#) and the [California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse for Child Welfare](#).
 - Dedicate staff with expertise areas around trauma-informed and healing-centered practice to implement support and resilience practices with staff experiencing trauma and burnout.
 - Support and provide opportunities for staff exploring temporary job changes to continue in child welfare work without direct practice responsibilities.
 - Continue to encourage and support staff's professional development by increasing protections of staff time to participate in training and other activities to enable full engagement in these opportunities.

Recommendations for Future Study of CCWSC Alumni

8. Study career pathway differences in Colorado county agencies (e.g., what are opportunities for career pathway offered in urban counties and in rural counties?).
9. Develop a study further exploring sustainability practices unique to social work practitioners in child welfare (i.e., what keeps people hopeful in this work?).

Appendix A: Summary Table of Scale-Level Descriptives

Scales Summary		
<p>Agreement (4-point scale) 1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Agree 4 = Strongly Agree</p> <p>Agreement (5-point scale) 1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neither Disagree nor Agree 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree</p>	<p>Accuracy 1 = Very Inaccurate 2 = Somewhat Inaccurate 3 = Somewhat Accurate 4 = Very Accurate</p>	<p>Satisfaction 1 = Very Dissatisfied 2 = Dissatisfied 3 = Satisfied 4 = Very Satisfied</p>

Scale Mean Scores	<i>(n = 6-75)</i>	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Child Welfare Fit and Self-Efficacy	4.42	0.44
Organizational Climate*	3.83	0.43
Organizational Climate: Role Clarity Subscale*	4.09	0.65
Organizational Climate: Role Conflict Subscale*	2.82	0.79
Organizational Climate: Job Importance Subscale*	4.36	0.47
Organizational Climate: Job Autonomy Subscale*	3.70	0.66
Organizational Climate: Job is Challenging Subscale*	4.42	0.46
Organizational Climate: Organizational Innovation Subscale*	3.78	0.77
Organizational Climate: Organizational Justice (fairness) Subscale*	3.56	0.87
Organizational Climate: Organizational Support Subscale*	3.59	0.87
Job Satisfaction	3.16	0.39
Job Satisfaction: General Job Satisfaction Subscale	3.17	0.42
Job Satisfaction: Job Engagement Subscale	3.15	0.42
Peer Support	3.39	0.48
Psychological Safety	3.08	0.57
Intent to Stay at Agency	2.94	0.48
Intent to Stay: Commitment to Stay at Agency Subscale	3.05	0.58
Intent to Stay: Constraints for Staying at Agency Subscale	2.75	0.62
Supervision for Caseworkers/Frontline Staff	3.45	0.61
Supervision for Supervisors	3.41	0.59
Supervision for Mid-level Managers	3.21	0.82
Satisfaction with Supervision Quality and Frequency	3.32	0.62

*5-point rating scale

Appendix B: Summary Table of Item-Level Descriptives

Scale/Items		
Child Welfare Fit and Self-Efficacy 4-point rating scale	(<i>n</i> = 74-75)	
Please indicate the extent to which you agree on the following statements.	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1. I have the skills and knowledge necessary to be effective in my job.	4.61	0.70
2. When I am challenged by a situation in a case, I am motivated to figure out a solution.	4.69	0.54
3. I like the individuality of cases in child welfare (i.e., no two cases are exactly the same).	4.63	0.51
4. I have always wanted to work with children and families.	4.27	0.88
5. I am confident that with my background (education and experiences), I am a good fit for a career in child welfare.	4.67	0.55
6. My professional goals are directed towards a successful child welfare career.	4.31	0.73
7. My personal values are aligned with the values guiding child welfare practice.	4.27	0.83
8. I plan to have a long-term career in the child welfare field.	4.01	1.04
9. I am committed to the well-being of children and families.	4.77	0.42
10. I am comfortable with asking my coworkers for help.	4.55	0.58
11. I was prepared for the kinds of challenges I face as a child welfare practitioner.	3.81	1.09
12. I know how to accomplish what is needed on my cases.	4.40	0.64
13. I believe I am a competent child welfare practitioner.	4.55	0.62
14. My supervisor and coworkers share with me the realities of working in this child welfare agency.	4.39	0.73
Organizational Culture and Climate 5-point rating scale	(<i>n</i> = 74-75)	

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements:	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Role Clarity Subscale		
1. It is often not clear who has the authority to make decisions regarding my job.	2.47	1.07
2. The goals and objectives of my staff team are clearly defined.	4.32	0.64
3. My job responsibilities are clearly defined.	4.25	0.82
4. I know what is expected of me in my agency.	4.25	0.82
Role Conflict Subscale		
5. Too many rules and regulations interfere with how well I am able to do my job.	3.08	1.08
6. I have to do things for my job that are against my better judgment.	2.56	1.13
7. There are too many people telling me what to do.	2.51	1.06
8. I am held responsible for things over which I have no control.	3.13	1.03
Job Importance Subscale		
9. A lot of people outside my agency are affected by how I do my job.	4.09	0.79
10. I feel that my job is important to the functioning of my staff team.	4.44	0.53
11. I feel that my work makes a meaningful contribution.	4.44	0.55
12. I feel that my work is highly important.	4.47	0.58
Job Autonomy Subscale		
13. I have a great deal of freedom to decide how to do my job.	3.71	0.80
14. Control is assigned so that I have authority to make decisions within my own work area.	3.72	0.80
15. It is up to me to decide how my job should best be done.	3.36	0.92
16. I have the freedom to complete task assignments without being over-supervised.	4.01	0.81

Job is Challenging Subscale		
17. My job requires a wide range of skills.	4.64	0.48
18. My job requires a lot of skill and effort to do it well.	4.53	0.50
19. My job challenges my abilities.	4.24	0.67
20. I am able to make full use of my knowledge and skills in my job.	4.25	0.70
Organizational Innovation Subscale		
21. I am encouraged to develop my ideas.	4.15	0.83
22. I am encouraged to try new ways of doing my job.	3.81	0.85
23. My agency encourages me to improve on my boss's methods.	3.44	1.00
24. My agency encourages me to find new ways around old problems.	3.72	0.92
Organizational Justice (Fairness) Subscale		
25. Decisions about my job are made in a fair manner.	3.67	0.92
26. Before decisions about my job are made, all of my concerns are heard.	3.26	1.09
27. Accurate and complete information is collected before decisions are made about my job.	3.52	1.00
28. I can obtain additional information when decisions about my job are unclear.	3.81	0.93
Organizational Support Subscale		
29. My agency shows very little concern for me.	2.37	1.06
30. My agency really cares about my well-being.	3.57	1.00
31. My agency cares about my general satisfaction at work.	3.59	1.07
32. My agency cares about my opinions.	3.56	0.99
Job Satisfaction 4-point rating scale	(n =74-75)	

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements:	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
General Job Satisfaction Subscale		
1. All in all, I am satisfied with my job.	3.17	0.50
2. My job fits my career goals.	3.19	0.48
3. In my work, I have a feeling of success and accomplishment.	3.31	0.52
4. My work has the right level of challenge.	3.21	0.53
5. I feel appreciated for the work that I do.	2.95	0.68
Job Engagement Subscale		
6. When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work.	2.88	0.54
7. I am enthusiastic about my job.	3.09	0.50
8. My job inspires me.	3.15	0.57
9. I am proud of the work I do.	3.45	0.53
Peer Support 4-point rating scale	(<i>n</i> = 66)	
For the following statements, please think of your peers in your own unit or team, then rate your level of agreement:	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
In my agency...		
1. Coworkers share information with each other to improve the effectiveness of client services.	3.39	0.52
2. Coworkers provide guidance on work tasks when needed (for example, completing paperwork, accessing resources, or demonstrating how to do something).	3.41	0.53
3. Coworkers are willing to ask for help from colleagues.	3.38	0.65

4. Coworkers count on each other to resolve difficult work problems.	3.38	0.60
5. Staff work together to get things done (for example, covering caseloads or meetings, completing paperwork).	3.38	0.63
Psychological Safety 4-point rating scale	(n = 74)	
Please indicate how accurately each of the following statements describes your work environment:	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1. I am able to bring up problems and tough issues.	3.39	0.77
2. People in this organization sometimes reject others for being different.	2.26	0.92
3. It is safe to take a risk in this organization.	2.72	0.77
4. It is easy for me to ask other members of this organization for help.	3.35	0.77
5. I feel appreciated for the work that I do.	3.18	0.82
6. No one in this organization would deliberately act in a way that undermines my efforts.	3.11	0.73
Intent to Stay 4-point rating scale	(n = 73-74)	
Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements:	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1. I plan to leave this agency as soon as possible.	1.65	0.77
2. I have too much time invested at this agency to leave.	2.62	0.90
3. I expect to still be working at this agency in 5 years.	2.88	0.72
4. I am committed to staying at this agency.	2.93	0.67
5. I would gain little from switching to another child welfare agency.	2.89	0.81
Supervision for Frontline Staff 4-point rating scale	(n = 39-42)	

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements:	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
My immediate supervisor...		
1. Genuinely cares about me.	3.59	0.59
2. Supports me in difficult case situations.	3.55	0.63
3. Values my opinion in case decision-making.	3.62	0.54
4. Works with me to prevent vicarious trauma and burnout.	3.38	0.81
5. Helps me apply clinical knowledge to cases.	3.28	0.83
6. Uses supervision to teach me new skills.	3.19	0.83
7. Facilitates a strong, mutual assessment of the case.	3.46	0.74
8. Helps me create effective plans for clients.	3.50	0.72
Supervision for Supervisors 4-point rating scale	(n = 12)	
Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements:	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
My direct supervisor...		
1. Knows child welfare policies.	3.50	1.00
2. Knows how to build effective case plans.	3.33	0.98
3. Knows Indian Child Welfare Act policies.	3.50	0.80
4. Knows current intervention practices in child welfare.	3.58	0.67
5. Knows current practices in my unit's area of specialty.	3.42	0.79
6. Genuinely cares about me.	3.58	0.67
7. Supports me in difficult case situations.	3.58	0.67
8. Values my opinion in decision-making.	3.67	0.49
9. Works with me to prevent vicarious trauma and burnout among my staff.	3.25	0.87

10. Wants me to be successful in my job.	3.67	0.49
11. Encourages my own self-care as a supervisor.	3.58	0.51
12. Sets aside time for individual supervision with me.	3.42	0.67
13. Uses supervision to teach me new skills.	2.67	1.15
14. Helps me create a strong plan of action with regard to staff issues.	3.08	1.16
15. Supports me in difficult personnel situations.	3.25	1.14
Supervision for Mid-level Managers 4-point rating scale	(n = 6)	
Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements:	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
My direct supervisor...		
1. Provides clear directives regarding what is expected of me in my job.	2.83	1.17
2. Understands the challenges of being in middle management.	2.83	1.17
3. Supports my leadership in front of staff.	3.17	1.17
4. Provides me with the resources necessary (within their control) to accomplish what is asked of me.	3.17	1.17
5. Assists me in problem solving.	3.33	0.82
6. Helps me create strategic plans of action.	3.17	1.17
7. Facilitates a supportive middle manager peer group.	2.50	1.22
8. Includes me on decisions impacting the organization.	3.33	0.82
9. Listens to me when discussing the needs of staff.	3.50	0.55
10. Supports my leadership development.	3.33	0.82
11. Provides regular feedback on my job performance.	3.33	0.82
12. Encourages me to use data to inform team and individual supervision.	3.67	0.82
13. Respects my professional decisions.	3.50	0.55
14. Effectively communicates how the mission of our organization applies to my job.	3.33	1.21

Supervision Quality and Frequency 4-point rating scale	(n = 61-73)	
Please indicate your level of satisfaction with the following at your agency:	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
About your direct supervisor...		
1. How satisfied are you with the current quality of individual supervision?	3.42	0.72
2. How satisfied are you with the current quality of group supervision?	3.03	0.79
3. How satisfied are you with the current frequency of individual supervision?	3.47	0.69
4. How satisfied are you with the current frequency of group supervision?	3.21	0.78

Appendix C: Survey Instrument

Informed Consent Information

- I agree to participate in the survey. (granted access to survey)
- I do not agree to participate in the survey. (redirected to end of survey)

Demographics (All Participants)

What state did you receive your stipend?

- Dropdown list of all states

Colorado will be only valid answer; all other responses will send respondent to end of survey.

What school did you attend while receiving the Colorado child welfare scholarship?

- Colorado College
- Colorado State University - Fort Collins
- Colorado State University - Pueblo
- Metropolitan State University of Denver
- University of Colorado - Boulder
- University of Colorado - Colorado Springs
- University of Denver

Only valid answers will continue to rest of survey; invalid school responses will be sent to end of survey.

Your privacy is extremely important, and we value your honest responses so that we can make decisions to improve the child welfare education and training in Colorado.

Your name and email address will only be used by the survey software to track who has responded for the purpose of generating reminder emails and distributing incentives for participation. We will replace them with an ID number in the dataset that is used for analyses.

First Name: _____ Last Name: _____

Preferred Email*: _____

*Note: Amazon gift cards and future study correspondences will be directed to this e-mail address.

Secondary Email: _____

What degree did you obtain when you received the CCWSC child welfare stipend/scholarship?

- BSW
- MSW
- Both BSW and MSW
- Have not graduated (*directed to end of survey*)
- Did not finish program (*directed to end of survey*)

In what month did you graduate from your program?

- Dropdown list from January to December

In what year did you graduate from your program?

- Dropdown list from 1995 to 2021

What is your gender?

- Female
- Male
- Nonbinary/third gender
- Prefer to self-describe:
- Prefer not to say

Do you identify as transgender?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

Which best describes your race/ethnicity? (Please select one option only.)

- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Black or African American
- Hispanic or Latino

- Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
- White or Caucasian (non-Hispanic origin)
- Multiracial/Multiethnic:
- Other, please specify:

Do you identify as a person of color?

- Yes
- No

What is your age?

- Dropdown list from 18 to 65

What is your post-graduation repayment status?

- I am in the process of fulfilling my employment obligation to repay the child welfare stipend/scholarship.
- I have completed my employment obligation to repay the child welfare stipend/scholarship.
- I am in deferment (on pause) of the employment obligation.
- I chose to pay back the stipend/scholarship amount instead of fulfilling the employment obligation.
- Other, please describe:

DISPLAY LOGIC: If graduate has completed or is in the process of fulfilling employment obligation

When did you/do you expect to complete your employment obligation?

- Month: [Dropdown list from January to December]
- Year: Dropdown list from XXXX to 2021

What are you doing now?

- Working in a child welfare agency in Colorado (public state/county office, private, or tribal)
- Working in a child welfare agency in another state (public, private, or tribal)
- Working in another human services job or agency (i.e., supporting children/families/adults in other services aside from child welfare)
- Working in a field unrelated to social work or human services
- Not currently employed
- Other, please describe:

Work Experience in Child Welfare (*All Participants*)

We would like to hear about your career path since you graduated from your social work program.

Were you already working in a child welfare agency at the time that you received a stipend/scholarship from your social work program?

- Yes
- No

DISPLAY LOGIC: For everyone

Career Paths After Graduation (For everyone)

We want to hear more about your positions and career path since graduation. In the next series of questions, please reflect on your career experiences after you received a child welfare scholarship from Colorado.

	Yes	No
When you began planning your career, was child welfare your first choice?		
Is this your first full-time child welfare job?		
If you could turn back the clock and revisit your decision to take your current job, would you make the same decision?		

Approximately how many years did you work in child welfare after graduation?

- Dropdown choices: *N/A*; from *Less than a year* to *50*

Approximately how many years have you worked in child welfare overall?

- Dropdown choices: *N/A*; from *Less than a year* to *50*

SKIP LOGIC: IF “N/A” SELECTED, SKIP TO OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

How many child welfare agencies (*counties, state, or private*) did you work in?

- *Dropdown choices from 0 to 50*

What type of child welfare agencies have you worked in? (Please select all that apply.)

- Public child welfare agency (a county, regional, or state office)
- Tribal child welfare agency
- Federal agency

- Private child welfare agency
- Other, please describe: _____

How many different child welfare position titles have you had (e.g., Case Manager 1, Case Manager 2, Supervisor, Program Manager)?

- *Dropdown choices from 0 to 10*

Please check all the levels of job positions that you have had in child welfare and enter the number of years that you worked in these job positions. *Check all that apply.*

	Job Titles	Number of Years:
<input type="checkbox"/>	Support Staff (directly working with clients)	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Support Staff (in administration or other areas, not directly working with clients)	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Child Welfare Case Worker	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Child Welfare Supervisor	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Child Welfare Manager	
<input type="checkbox"/>	County Director	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Child Welfare Training	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Child Welfare Data Analyst	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Child Welfare Utilization Manager	
<input type="checkbox"/>	State Office Administrator/Manager/or similar level	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other, please describe: -----	

What is your current job title?

Do you work directly with children and/or families?

- Yes
- No

Approximately how many years have you worked in this position?

- Dropdown choices from *Less than a year* to *50*

How many of each type of job change have you had? Please enter whole numbers only!

- a. Lateral job change (similar salary, similar responsibilities): _____
- b. Promotion (higher salary, increased responsibilities): _____
- c. Step down (decreased salary, decreased responsibilities): _____
- d. Took position outside of child welfare: _____

How many Colorado county child welfare offices have you worked in?

- *Dropdown list: N/A, 1 to 20*

Have you worked for CDHS (state office), Division of Child Welfare?

- Yes
- No

Open-ended Questions

DISPLAY LOGIC: If “Working in an unrelated field” or “Working in another human services job or agency” or “Unemployed” is selected

1. Tell us about your decision to leave child welfare:

2. Do you see yourself returning to a career in child welfare?

- Yes
- No

3. Can you please share why or why not you would return to working in child welfare?

SKIP LOGIC: SKIP TO END OF SURVEY AFTER QUESTION

DISPLAY LOGIC: If “Working in a child welfare agency (public, private, or tribal)” is selected

1. What has influenced your career decisions and trajectory to stay in the child welfare field post-graduation (i.e., personal, organizational, field-related factors)?

2. What have been the challenges to remaining in child welfare?

3. How would you describe your career plans in child welfare at this point in your career?

4. Is there anything else that you would like to share about your experience of being a stipend/scholarship recipient and now a child welfare professional?

Scale Measures

This section is only for alumni currently working in child welfare.

Child Welfare Fit and Self-Efficacy

- **Instructions:** Please indicate the extent to which you agree on the following statements.
- **Rating Scale:** 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree
- **Citation:** Butler Institute for Families. (2019). *Stipend student inventory: Child welfare fit and self-efficacy* (Unpublished measure). University of Denver, Denver, CO.

Child Welfare Fit and Self-Efficacy

1. I have the skills and knowledge necessary to be effective in my job.
2. When I am challenged by a situation in a case, I am motivated to figure out a solution.
3. I like the individuality of cases in child welfare (i.e., no two cases are exactly the same).
4. I have always wanted to work with children and families.
5. I am confident that with my background (education and experiences), I am a good fit for a career in child welfare.
6. My professional goals are directed towards a successful child welfare career.
7. My personal values are aligned with the values guiding child welfare practice.
8. I plan to have a long-term career in the child welfare field.
9. I am committed to the well-being of children and families.
10. I am comfortable with asking my coworkers for help.
11. I was prepared for the kinds of challenges I face as a child welfare practitioner.
12. I know how to accomplish what is needed on my cases.
13. I believe I am a competent child welfare practitioner.
14. My supervisor and coworkers share with me the realities of working in this child welfare agency.

Organizational Climate

- **Display Logic:** For everyone
- **Instructions:** Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements.
- **Rating Scale:** 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree

Organizational Climate and Culture

Ambiguity subscale

1. It is often not clear who has the authority to make decisions regarding my job.
2. The goals and objectives of my unit are clearly defined.
3. My job responsibilities are clearly defined.

4. I know what is expected of me in my agency.

Conflict subscale

5. Too many rules and regulations interfere with how well I am able to do my job.

6. I have to do things on my job that are against my better judgment.

7. There are too many people telling me what to do.

8. I am held responsible for things over which I have no control.

Importance subscale

9. A lot of people outside my agency are affected by how I do my job.

10. I feel my job is important to the functioning of my unit.

11. I feel that my work makes a meaningful contribution.

12. I feel that my work is highly important.

Autonomy subscale

13. I have a great deal of freedom to decide how to do my job.

14. Control is assigned so that I have authority to make decisions within my own work area.

15. It is up to me to decide how my job should best be done.

16. I have the freedom to complete task assignments without being over-supervised.

Challenge subscale

17. My job requires a wide range of skills.

18. My job requires a lot of skill and effort to do it well.

19. My job challenges my abilities.

20. I am able to make full use of my knowledge and skills in my job.

Innovation subscale

21. I am encouraged to develop my ideas.

22. I am encouraged to try new ways of doing my job.

23. My agency encourages me to improve on my boss's methods.

24. My agency encourages me to find new ways around old problems.

Justice subscale

25. Decisions about my job are made in a fair manner.

- | |
|--|
| 26. Before decisions about my job are made, all of my concerns are heard. |
| 27. Accurate and complete information is collected before decisions are made about my job. |
| 28. I can obtain additional information when decisions about my job are unclear. |
| Support subscale |
| 29. My agency shows very little concern for me. |
| 30. My agency really cares about my well-being. |
| 31. My agency cares about my general satisfaction at work. |
| 32. My agency cares about my opinions. |

Job Satisfaction

- **Display Logic: For everyone**
- **Instructions:** Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements.
- **Rating Scale:** 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree
- **Citation:** Butler Institute for Families. (2019). *Job satisfaction* (Unpublished measure). University of Denver, Denver, CO.

[This included modified items from New York Social Work Education Consortium. (2001). Workforce Retention Survey Instrument. Albany: Author; Schaufeli, W. B., Bakker, A. B., & Salanova, M. (2006). The Measurement of Work Engagement With a Short Questionnaire: A Cross-National Study. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 66(4), 701-716.; and Diener, E., Emmons, R. A., Larsen, R. J., & Griffin, S. (1985). Satisfaction with life scale (SWLS). *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 49(1), 71-75.]

Job Satisfaction

General Job Satisfaction

- | |
|--|
| 1. All in all, I am satisfied with my job. |
| 2. My job fits my career goals. |
| 3. In my work, I have a feeling of success and accomplishment. |
| 4. My work has the right level of challenge. |
| 5. I feel appreciated for the work that I do. |

Job Engagement

- | |
|---|
| 6. When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work. |
| 7. I am enthusiastic about my job. |
| 8. My job inspires me. |
| 9. I am proud of the work that I do. |

Peer Support

- **Display Logic: For everyone**
- **Instructions:** For the following statements, please think of your peers in your own unit or team, then rate your level of agreement.
- **Rating Scale:** 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree
- **Citation:** Butler Institute for Families (2017). *Peer support* (Unpublished measure). Denver: University of Denver.

[This included modified items from Widerszal-Bazyl, & Cieślak, M. (2000). Monitoring Psychosocial Stress at Work: Development of the Psychosocial Working Conditions Questionnaire. *International Journal of Occupational Safety and Ergonomics*, 6(sup1), 59–70.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10803548.2000.11105108>]

Instrumental Peer Support

In my agency ...

- | |
|---|
| 1. Coworkers share information with each other to improve the effectiveness of client services. |
| 2. Coworkers provide guidance on work tasks when needed (for example, completing paperwork, accessing resources, or demonstrating how to do something). |
| 3. Coworkers are willing to ask for help from colleagues. |
| 4. Coworkers count on each other to resolve difficult work problems. |
| 5. Staff work together to get things done (for example, covering caseloads or meetings, completing paperwork). |

Supervision for Frontline Staff

- **Display Logic: For caseworkers**
- **Instructions:** Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements.
- **Rating Scale:** 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Agree, 4 = Strongly Agree, 0 = Not Applicable or unsure

My immediate supervisor...

- | |
|------------------------------|
| 1. Genuinely cares about me. |
|------------------------------|

2. Supports me in difficult case situations.
3. Values my opinion in case decision-making.
4. Works with me to prevent vicarious trauma and burnout.
5. Helps me apply clinical knowledge to cases.
6. Uses supervision to teach me new skills.
7. Facilitates a strong, mutual assessment of the case.
8. Helps me create effective plans for clients.

Supervision for Supervisors

- **Display Logic: For supervisors**
- **Instructions:** Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements.
- **Rating Scale:** 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Agree, 4 = Strongly Agree, 0 = Not Applicable or unsure

My direct supervisor...

1. Knows child welfare policies.
2. Knows how to build effective case plans.
3. Knows Indian Child Welfare Act policies.
4. Knows current intervention practices in child welfare.
5. Knows current practices in my unit's area of specialty.
6. Genuinely cares about me.
7. Supports me in difficult case situations.
8. Values my opinion in decision-making.
9. Works with me to prevent vicarious trauma and burnout among my staff.
10. Wants me to be successful in my job.
11. Encourages my own self-care as a supervisor.
12. Sets aside time for individual supervision with me.
13. Uses supervision to teach me new skills.
14. Helps me create a strong plan of action with regard to staff issues.
15. Supports me in difficult personnel situations.

Supervision for Managers

- **Display Logic: For managers**

- **Instructions:** Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements.
- **Rating Scale:** 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Agree, 4 = Strongly Agree, 0 = Not Applicable or unsure

My direct supervisor...

1. Provides clear directives regarding what is expected of me in my job.
2. Understands the challenges of being in middle management.
3. Supports my leadership in front of staff.
4. Provides me with the resources necessary (within their control) to accomplish what is asked of me.
5. Assists me in problem solving.
6. Helps me create strategic plans of action.
7. Facilitates a supportive middle manager peer group.
8. Includes me on decisions impacting the organization.
9. Listens to me when discussing the needs of staff.
10. Supports my leadership development.
11. Provides regular feedback on my job performance.
12. Encourages me to use data to inform team and individual supervision.
13. Respects my professional decisions.
14. Effectively communicates how the mission of our organization applies to my job.

Supervision Quality and Frequency

Display Logic: For everyone

1. How many different supervisors have you had in the past year?
2. How long has your current supervisor been your supervisor?
[Dropdown options: Less than 1 year, 1, 2, ... to 50]

Please rate the following statements/questions according to the scale provided.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	N/A
1. My direct supervisor is available by phone, email, or in person during regular					

business hours when I need support in completing my job.					
	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	N/A
2. How satisfied are you with the current quality of individual supervision?					
3. How satisfied are you with the current quality of group supervision?					
4. How satisfied are you with the current frequency of individual supervision?					
5. How satisfied are you with the current frequency of group supervision?					

On average, how often do you meet with your supervisor/manager for:

	Weekly	Every 2 Weeks	Monthly	Every 6 Months	Annually	Never
6. individual, scheduled supervision?						
7. group, scheduled supervision?						
8. individual, informal support (“as needed”; “doorway consultation”; unscheduled)?						

Psychological Safety

- **Display Logic: For everyone**
- **Instructions:** Please indicate how accurately each of the following statements describes your work environment.
- **Rating Scale:** 1 = Very Inaccurate, 2 = Somewhat Inaccurate, 3 = Somewhat Accurate, 4 = Very Accurate

1. I am able to bring up problems and tough issues.
2. People in this organization sometimes reject others for being different.
3. It is safe to take a risk in this organization.
4. It is easy for me to ask other members of this organization for help.
5. I feel appreciated for the work that I do.
6. No one in this organization would deliberately act in a way that undermines my efforts.

Intent to Stay

- **Display Logic:** For everyone
- **Instructions:** Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements. Please note: if you do not work in protective services, please think of *human services* rather than *child welfare*.
- **Rating Scale:** 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Agree, 4 = Strongly Agree

1. I plan to leave this agency as soon as possible.
2. I have too much time invested at this agency to leave.
3. I expect to still be working at this agency in 5 years.
4. I am committed to staying at this agency.
5. I would gain little from switching to another child welfare agency.

Intent to Stay Follow-up Questions

- **Display Logic:** For everyone
- **Instructions:** Select only the items most relevant to you, and rank order those items so that “1” is the most important reason, “2” is the second most important reason, etc.
- **Rating Scale:** 1, 2, 3, etc.

What are the primary reasons that you stay in your job?

The work is fulfilling.

Client relationships

The schedule works well for me.

Alternative jobs are unattractive to me.

<input type="checkbox"/> Coworker relationships <input type="checkbox"/> Financial constraints <input type="checkbox"/> Effort required to leave	<input type="checkbox"/> It fits with my family life. <input type="checkbox"/> I like the job location. <input type="checkbox"/> It matches my skill set.	<input type="checkbox"/> It allows me to make a difference in the lives of children and families. <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify): _____
--	---	--

About how many years do you expect to be working in your agency?

- Less than 1 year
- 1-3 years
- 4-6 years
- 7-10 years
- the rest of my career

Within the past year, have you considered looking for a new job? ___Yes ___No
(if "no", please skip to the next section)

In the past year...

	Almost never	Some of the time	Often	Almost every day
a. How often have you thought about leaving?				
b. How often have you spoken with friends, spouses, partners, family members, etc., about leaving?				

How often do you search the internet for jobs?

- Never
- Every few months
- Monthly
- Weekly
- Daily

END OF SURVEY

Appendix D: Focus Group Protocol

1. What led you to choose child welfare as a profession? (In what ways do you feel that working in child welfare is a good fit for you?)
2. What have been the strongest influences towards your commitment to working in child welfare?
3. A recent study with child welfare staff shows that “hope” is an important factor to alleviate burnout. What goals, activities, and/or practices help build your sense of hope and sustain you in your child welfare career? (How would you complete this phrase? I am most hopeful at work when I’m _____; What activities or practices are available to you at your agency that promote a “hope-centered practice”?)
4. For those who have had job changes within the child welfare profession, what were some of the reasons that led you to make changes?
5. Have you considered leaving this profession before? (Or are you considering it now?)
6. What are your professional development goals within the child welfare profession?
7. Is there anything else that you would like to share about your experience of being a stipend recipient and now a child welfare worker that we did not ask about?