



VIRGINIA'S TITLE IV-E
CHILD WELFARE
STIPEND PROGRAM



Virginia Department of Social Services

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CWSP STUDENT NEWSLETTER

University Updates

CWSP Welcomes 2018-19 Students and New Partner University!

We welcome all new and returning Child Welfare Stipend Program (CWSP) students to the 2018-19 academic year! We also welcome the CWSP's newest partner university, [East Tennessee State University-Abingdon \(ETSU-Abingdon\)](#). New students at ETSU-Abingdon as well as new and returning students at [George Mason University \(GMU\)](#), [Norfolk State University \(NSU\)](#), [Radford University \(RU\)](#) and [Virginia Commonwealth University \(VCU\)](#) comprise the group of 58 exceptional BSW and MSW students across the Commonwealth who have been selected for this year's program. We also extend a warm welcome to our new part-time MSW cohort participating in the inaugural year of the Child Welfare Employee Education Assistance Program (CWEEAP). These dedicated individuals who work full-time at local departments of social services (LDSS) were recommended by their directors for participation, and are completing their MSW degree on a part-time basis at partner universities. The CWEEAP is distinct from the CWSP, but similar in that it is IV-E funded and provides participants with many of the same CWSP components. At some partner universities, CWSP and CWEEAP students may share classes, field seminars and topical seminar experiences this year.

CWSP News and Accomplishments

For an overview of what our students and coordinators have accomplished since the last newsletter edition:

- » **In May, 22 CWSP students graduated with a BSW or MSW degree!** The CWSP class of 2018 is featured below, by university.



RU's CWSP Class of 2018, left to right: Amber Beidler (BSW), Katla Figgatt (MSW), Savannah Gallegos (BSW), Haley Menapace (BSW), Summer Norton (MSW), Asiana Rollins (BSW), Shane Smith (BSW).



GMU's May 2018 stipend graduates, left to right: Bridget Mayo (MSW), Chantel Jarrett (MSW), Claire Carmody (MSW), Emily Nall (BSW), Hannah Fost (MSW).

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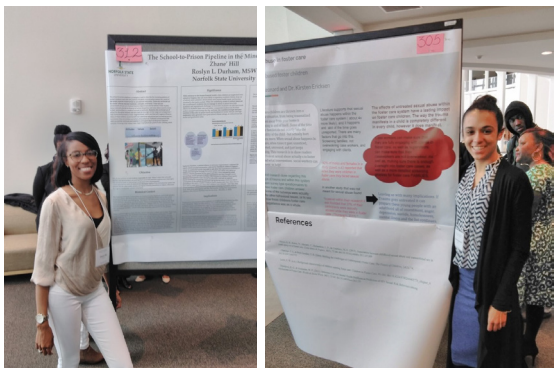
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NSU's BSW stipend recipients, Destiny Rogers-Sherrod (left) and Tatiana Leonard (right) graduated in May 2018. Not pictured – Zhane Hill (BSW).



VCU's CWSP class of 2018, pictured clockwise from top left: Naomi Reddish (University Coordinator); Laura Young (MSW), Katelin McManana (MSW), Ana Tello-Duran (MSW), Candice Combs (MSW), Tia Gianniny (MSW), Jasmin Nelson (MSW). Not pictured – Alex Orton (MSW).



Two NSU stipend students presented distinguished academic research pertaining to child welfare this spring. At the 2018 BSW Research Symposium at NSU, Zhane Hill (pictured above, left), presented on the school-to-prison pipeline in minority communities; Tatiana Leonard (pictured above, right) presented on sexual abuse in foster care.



CWSP state and university coordinators presented on Virginia's unique IV-E stipend program model and use of regional committees at the annual Title IV-E Roundtable in Portland, Oregon this summer. Pictured from left to right: Bethany Robinson (state coordinator), Naomi Reddish (VCU coordinator), Kathy Cornejo (GMU coordinator), Erica Thornton (RU coordinator).

Family First Prevention Services Act

The Family First Prevention Services Act (Family First) was enacted by Congress on February 9, 2018 as part of the larger [Bipartisan Budget Act \(BBA\)](#), and represents the most significant re-write of Title IV of the Social Security Act since 1981. Family First enables states to use federal funds through Title IV of the Social Security Act to provide enhanced support to children and families, and prevent children from entering foster care. Services available to families under Family First include mental health and substance abuse treatment, prevention services, in-home parenting skills programs, and kinship navigator services. Family First also aims to reduce placement of children in

congregate care. Family First will require that services meet certain [evidence based practice](#) criteria, ensuring that interventions provided are supported by peer-reviewed, scientific research with demonstrated effectiveness. Visit the [California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse for Child Welfare](#) website for a more in-depth understanding of the levels of evidence-based practice.

The CWSP newsletter will continue to feature Family First updates and related state initiatives this year, including implications for policy and practice at local agency levels.

(Source: VDSS FUSION website, 2018)

KinGAP Legislation

The [Kinship Guardianship Assistance Program](#), or KinGAP, took effect in Virginia July 1, 2018, initiating an important step toward supporting relative caregivers and facilitating permanency for Virginia's youth in foster care. When adoption and reunification have been ruled out, KinGAP can provide another permanency option for children placed with relatives. Other eligibility criteria apply, including that

the child in care must be related to the relative caregiver parent by blood, marriage or adoption, and must have been placed in foster care with that relative for six consecutive months. For more information on kinship care and KinGAP, please visit the [VDSS Foster Care website](#).

(Sources: [VDSS Foster Care website](#), [Voices for Virginia's Children](#))

VDSS Initiatives

COMPASS: Virginia's Comprehensive Permanency Assessment and Safety System

CWSP students will complete an internship in a local department of social services (LDSS), and will have the opportunity to participate in many VDSS and LDSS initiatives. Students may have the chance to use some of the state's newest tools in their case work. As part of an ongoing process designed to improve Virginia's ability to manage information and streamline case work processes, VDSS began work toward the Comprehensive Permanency Assessment and Safety System, or COMPASS. The VDSS COMPASS team shared the following information in order to familiarize CWSP students with the initiative, particularly for those entering LDSS placements.

What is COMPASS?

COMPASS is Virginia's response to new [Comprehensive Child Welfare Information System \(CCWIS\)](#) federal regulations. Beginning in 2016, VDSS embarked on a multi-

year project to modernize the department's child welfare information systems. VDSS is committed to providing staff with innovative, integrated, and web-based tools needed to provide effective child welfare services thereby accelerating service delivery and improving outcomes.

Mission

The COMPASS mission is to create a comprehensive Child Welfare Information System which supports Virginia's children and families in achieving safety, permanency and well-being.

Vision

The vision set forth by COMPASS is to:

- Meet the diverse needs of front-line workers, state and local leadership, children, alumni, families and community supports.

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COMPASS *continued*

- Utilize innovative technology to facilitate case management and real-time reporting capabilities to achieve timely permanency and ensure the safety and well-being of children in the Commonwealth.
- Maximize the interoperability of existing and future systems that intersect with COMPASS to optimize service delivery, reduce duplicative efforts and capture the story of children and families served.

Program

The first component implemented through the COMPASS program was the Transcription services project through Flex-Dictate. Transcription is a dictation tool utilized by calling an 800 number and leaving a dictation recording which is then transcribed by a live typist and the Family Services Specialist (FSS) will be notified when transcription is available.

This service greatly improves workers' ability to quickly document facts, incidents, evaluations and observations during visits. The next project the COMPASS team will embark upon is providing innovative technology to FSS through a mobile solution. The mobility solution will offer key features that enable FSS to: enter new case notes and read existing ones from the case management system; complete assessments; access and update demographics and relationships; and, complete forms from a form library. The mobile solution will have the ability to be accessed both online and offline. When used offline, information entered or changed will automatically upload when a device comes back online.

VDSS' New *Permanency Matters* Newsletter

VDSS has published the first edition of a recurring, periodic newsletter titled *Permanency Matters*, which focuses on topics pertaining to permanency and child welfare, including reunification, kinship care, adoption, evidence-based

practice, and more. Check out *Permanency Matters* on the [VDSS public Foster Care page](#) and feel free to share amongst your academic and professional networks.

Regional Advisory Committees Ensure CWSP is Responsive to Virginia's Child Welfare Workforce Needs

A core component of the re-established stipend program is its partnerships with local child welfare agencies in each unique state region. Regional committees comprised of local public and child serving agency leadership meet regularly with state and university partner staff, enabling the program's ability to address regionally-specific population and workforce needs, while ensuring consistent, high quality training delivery across the state. Through use of regional committees, local agency leadership has

the opportunity to contribute to and become invested in the stipend program and students. Regional committee feedback ensures that the CWSP offers curricula and child-welfare topical seminars at each university that are responsive to each respective community. Field placements cultivated through regional committees produce graduates with hands-on experience drawn directly from field practice in each distinct region.



Regional Committees

- promote local agency buy-in and enthusiasm;
- ensure curriculum and training is responsive to local agency workforce needs;
- provide volunteers/social capital base;
- cultivate meaningful field practicums; and
- provide job information and networking opportunities for graduates.



We encourage CWSP alumni to join a CWSP Regional Committee! Your experience in the CWSP and as a child welfare professional is invaluable to the program's continued ability to support our current students. If you are interested in joining a regional committee or participating

in any other capacity (i.e., trainings, providing student mentorship, facilitating other means of student support, etc.) please reach out to the [CWSP State Coordinator](#) or the appropriate [university coordinator](#).

Trauma-Informed Child Welfare Practice

What is Trauma-Informed Practice?

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) defines a trauma-informed approach as one that:

- » realizes the widespread impact of trauma and understands potential pathways for recovery;
- » recognizes the signs and symptoms of trauma in clients, families, staff and others involved with the system; and
- » responds by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into policy, procedures, and practices and seeks to actively resist re-traumatization ([SAMHSA](#), 2014).

SAMHSA's six principals inherent to a trauma-informed approach include an emphasis on:

1. Safety
2. Trustworthiness and transparency
3. Peer support
4. Collaboration and mutuality
5. Empowerment, voice and choice
6. Cultural, historical, and gender issues

(Source: [SAMHSA](#), 2014)

The VDSS Practice Profiles outline specific ways in which trauma-informed practice is woven into work with children and families in the child welfare system. In the context of **advocating** for children, youth and families with whom we work, child welfare practitioners utilize a trauma lens by recognizing the impact of trauma experienced by the individuals we serve, and ensuring that we refer individuals and families to services and providers well-equipped to address trauma histories. During **assessment** stages for children coming into care, interviews should be conducted in child-friendly, private locations that feel safe to the child,



and minimize the number of interviews and interviewers as much as possible through collaboration and precise documentation. When we **partner** with children, youth and families, the trauma-informed value of *transparency* is upheld when we provide "realistic and honest disclosure of both positive and negative outcomes that may result from various team and individual actions" (VDSS Practice Profiles).

The concepts of empowerment, voice and choice are embraced in **planning** stages of child welfare practice, when we [search for relatives and adults who are significant](#) to the child, prepare in advance for family meetings and are knowledgeable and competent when it comes to resources in our communities. The trauma-informed practitioner will design the plan with the family present, and with their approval, in a manner which is consistent with the family's goals, strengths and choices. **Engagement**, the core component of the VDSS Practice Profiles, is practiced along the [child welfare continuum](#) and encompasses trauma-informed characteristics including *collaboration*, *empowerment* and competence in response to *cultural*, *historical* and *gender issues*. As trauma-informed child welfare workers, we actively [engage family members](#) and [plan for concurrent permanency goals](#).

(Sources: [Center for Advancement of Child Welfare Studies](#), [SAMHSA](#), [VDSS Foster Care Manual](#), [VDSS Practice Profiles](#))

Trauma Informed IV-E Training and Resources

The CWSP integrates trauma-informed practice components throughout the curricula. Field experiences, required electives and topical seminars address and educate on trauma assessment and referrals, the impact of trauma on brain development, behavioral symptoms related to trauma, and protective factors that boost resiliency. But, there is always more knowledge to be gained. CWSP students can access additional Virginia-specific and nationally-based trauma-informed care resources, including the following:

- » Take the [VDSS CWS4015:Trauma-Informed Child Welfare Practice](#) online and classroom training courses for practice enhancement and resume boosting.
 - » Find out if you are located in a region accessible to a Trauma-Informed Community Network (TICN). There are active TICNs serving the greater Richmond area, Charlottesville, Harrisonburg, Southside Virginia, and the greater Piedmont area. Visit the ACEs page for more in-depth information on [Virginia's TICNs](#).
 - » Consider joining the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) [Connection Network](#), an international online forum for all things trauma and resilience. ACEs offers sub-group communities, like the ACEs in Foster
- Care group, in which students and professionals can engage and share resources on locally- or topically-relevant events and initiatives.
 - » The [Center for Advanced Studies in Child Welfare](#) at the University of Minnesota School of Social Work produced a comprehensive resource on the intersection of trauma and child welfare in their Winter 2013 publication, *CW360® A Comprehensive Look at a Child Welfare Issue: Trauma Informed Child Welfare Practice*.
 - » The [National Center for Social Work Trauma and Education and Workforce Development](#) includes links to valuable resources including the *Child Welfare Trauma Training Toolkit*.
 - » The National Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connections hosted a webcast delving into what trauma looks like for children and youth in foster care, including a discussion on complex trauma resulting from chronic, repeated traumatic experiences. <http://www.nrcpfc.org/webcasts/28.html>.
 - » National Child Traumatic Stress Network provides a host of trauma and resiliency information - https://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/resources/resilience_and_child_traumatic_stress.pdf

Self-Care Corner



Burnout, compassion fatigue and secondary traumatic stress are **real** for child welfare workers and students. What are you doing to take care of yourself in the midst of the challenging academic, personal and professional journey on which you have embarked? The University of Buffalo's School of Social Work provides a resource, [How to Flourish in Social Work](#), which outlines the following self-care steps to combat burnout and exposure to vicarious trauma.

- | | |
|--|-----------------|
| ✓ Exercise at least three times a week | ✓ Laugh |
| ✓ Meditate | ✓ Eat well |
| ✓ Read | ✓ Sleep |
| ✓ Enjoy greenspace | ✓ Take time off |

Challenge: Uncover your personal approach toward handling stress. Take [this self-assessment inventory of lifestyle behaviors](#) to discover how you typically handle stress, the first step in knowing how to make positive changes that can better sustain your personal and professional well-being.

(Source: [University of Buffalo School of Social Work](#))

We want to hear from you!

The CWSP is always looking for ways to highlight and feature stipend students and alumni. If you are researching or presenting on a relevant child welfare topic, are involved in advocacy work or a special project, or are a recent graduate who can share your experiences as a new LDSS employee, please let us know! Email childwelfarestipend@dss.virginia.gov with any information or photos you would like to share.



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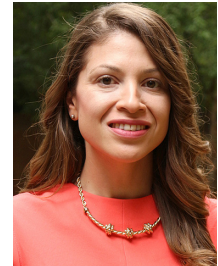
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