

Child Welfare Stipend Program – Frequently Asked Questions

- **What is title IV-E?**

Title IV-E refers to a section of the Social Security Act which provides funds for achieving the goal of improving the quality of care of children in foster care, reducing the number of children in foster care, returning children to their homes as soon as conditions permit, and facilitating the permanent placement of children who cannot be returned to their homes. These IV-E funds can be used towards social work education and training of new child welfare workers. Over 30 states currently utilize title IV-E funds for Child Welfare Stipend Programs at universities across the country.

- **How long has the Stipend Program been in place in Virginia?**

Between the years of 1996 through 2008, the Child Welfare Education and Support Program (the previous name for the CWSP), was running at Radford University, Norfolk State University and Virginia Commonwealth University. It was originally managed by the VCU VISSTA department. During the years that the program was running, it averaged 30 new graduates per year entering the child welfare workforce. The program was terminated in 2009 due to a loss of funding. In 2015, the program was re-designed and administration of the program was taken over by VDSS. Partnerships were developed with the four state universities that have both a BSW and MSW program: VCU, Radford, Norfolk State and George Mason. The program was re-named the Child Welfare Stipend Program (CWSP). Radford University was chosen as the pilot school and began admitting students into the CWSP for the fall 2016 academic semester. The other three universities will begin admitting students into their programs in fall 2017.

- **How many students receive stipends each year?**

Each university is able to admit up to 10 new students into the CWSP each year. VDSS awards each university 10 new stipends each year.

- **What is the amount of the stipend?**

The stipend is \$10,000 per academic year (this is an increase from \$8,000 in the previous program), for students enrolled full-time in one of the participating BSW or MSW programs. Stipends can only be used to reimburse tuition, university fees and books.

- **How are students selected to receive the stipend?**

Students must apply and be accepted into one of the participating schools of social work. Admitted students may then apply for the Child Welfare Stipend by completing an on-line application that is posted on their university's school of social work webpage. At each university an awards committee, consisting of university faculty / administration, and agency representatives from local departments of social services, makes the award

decisions. The decision is based upon the review of your application (that includes written responses to essay questions), and an in-person interview.

▪ **What is the student's work commitment after graduation?**

Upon graduation, the Stipend Recipient must obtain employment at a Local Department of Social Services within the Commonwealth of Virginia. The Recipient must maintain employment for one full calendar year (12 months) for every academic year that they received the stipend. For example, if the Recipient graduated from a participating MSW program and received the stipend for both years of the program (\$20,000 total), they would need to work for 24 months at a Local Department of Social Services.

▪ **What if I cannot find employment within the town/city where I reside?**

If the Recipient is not able to locate employment within a 75 mile radius of where they reside, then they must be willing to apply for jobs in other parts of the state and be willing to re-locate during the "pay-back" period. Recipient must show attempts at locating a position at the Local DSS agency (i.e. maintain copies of job applications and email correspondence with potential employers, offer letters or denial letters etc.).

▪ **In what circumstances would a Stipend Recipient have to pay back the stipend money?**

- Failure to graduate with a BSW or MSW degree.
- Failure to seek employment at a Local Department of Social Services
- Voluntary termination or involuntary termination of employment before completion of the work requirement.
- Becoming ineligible to work at a Local Department of Social Services due to not having a valid driver's license and/or not being able to pass a pre-employment criminal and CPS background check.

▪ **How should interested persons obtain more information about applying for admission to the Child Welfare Stipend Program?**

They should first contact the school that they are interested in directly. If they have any additional questions on the program, they should contact the State Child Welfare Stipend Coordinator:

Child Welfare Stipend Program Coordinator
Virginia Department of Social Services
(804)726-7423
childwelfarestipend@dss.virginia.gov