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The 2011 California Public Child Welfare Workforce Study: The Population Demographics & Educational Levels

Key Results

In 2011 county child welfare agencies reported having fewer public child welfare social workers and supervisors than in 2008.

60% of the respondents to the individual worker survey report holding a master's degree of some kind. Those holding MSWs in the public child welfare system constitute 40.6% of all respondents, a change from pre-Title IV-E days when the estimate was 20.5%.

The public child welfare staff is ethnically and racially diverse. Overall social workers and supervisors report holding their current positions for 6.1 years, have worked in the county for 10.5 years working for the county, and in the field of child welfare for 11.3 years on average. Title IV-E participants were more diverse and younger as a group.

The CalSWEC Title IV-E program supplies the majority of MSWs to the California public child welfare system. Many MSWs are supervisors, managers and administrators. Among those who have had their jobs for less than one year, 40.1% have participated in an MSW or BASW Title IV-E program. In 2011, 57.6% of a sample of 1230 MSWs in all positions report they have participated in a CalSWEC IV-E program. These findings strengthen the case for continuing workforce development in public child welfare.

In collaboration with the County Welfare Directors Association and the California Department of Social Services, CalSWEC has surveyed the state's public child welfare workforce every three to five years since 1992 to determine the extent to which the state is meeting its requirements for Master's-level social workers among child welfare social work staff.

The data for this 2011 study were gathered between August 2011 and February 2012 using two online survey instruments. The first was the *Agency Administrative Survey* aimed at gathering administrative data about agency staffing such as the number of staff, vacancies, need for bilingual workers, turnover and the effects of the economic downturn on hiring.

The second was the *Individual Worker Survey*. This survey was designed to obtain a more detailed perspective on the workforce by having individual child welfare staff complete it. As a result of the statewide participation of county child welfare agencies and public child welfare staff, we were able to gather substantial information on the demographics of the workforce, service assignments, education, professional licensure, experience level, interest in further training and further education.

I. The Population¹

- There were 10.7% more child welfare social workers and supervisors overall in 2008 than there were in 2011 in California's 58 counties.
- The numbers did not decrease similarly over all positions.
 - There are 7.2% fewer supervisors and 21.4% fewer case-carrying social workers in 2011, when compared to 2008 levels.
 - There are 52.8% more non-case-carrying social workers. This may be a response to increased teaming and coordination demands, new ways of organizing and prioritizing the work, and/or additional tasks/documentation associated with regulations.
- Although the 2918 responses from the individual worker sample constituted only 28.4% of the 2011 population,² the sample distribution by position generally reflects the population distribution by position and region (See Methodology, Section IX for more information).

2011 Population of California public child welfare workers³ as compared to 2008 Population

Year	Case-Carrying Social Workers	Non-Case Carrying Social workers⁴	Supervisors	Total
2008 Population	8772	1027	1813	11612
<i>Proportion in the 2008 Population</i>	75.5%	8.8%	15.6%	99.9%
2011 Population	7225	1569	1691	10485
<i>Proportion in the 2011 Population</i>	68.95%	14.96%	16.1%	100%

2011 Sample of California public child welfare workers as reported by individual workers compared to 2008 Sample

Sample	Case-Carrying Social workers	Non-Case Carrying Social workers	Supervisors	Total
2008 Sample	2027	527	564	3118
<i>Proportion in the 2008 Sample</i>	65.0%	16.9%	18%	99.9%
2011 Sample	1901	456	561	2918
<i>Proportion in the 2011 Sample</i>	65.1%	15.6%	19.2%	99.9%

¹ Three small counties did not report on the population of child welfare staff; so their 2008 numbers were substituted for the missing data.

² The proportion of respondents to population in 2008 was 26.9%.

³ Full-time, part-time, and extra hire staff included.

⁴ Non-case-carrying social workers are trainers, and other professional social workers who provide indirect services such as licensing, facilitating TDM meetings, planning, implementing policies such as inter-county transfers, and evaluation.

II. Sample demographics. Race/ethnicity: All respondents compared to IV-E participants

Staff Age and Ethnicity

The IV-E participants are more diverse as a group and younger than the entire sample. For all professional staff, Whites make up 51.6% of the sample. For IV-E participants who responded to the survey and who identify as White, the proportion is 37.9%.

On average, the IV-E social work participants who responded to this survey are younger than non IV-E participants. The average age for social workers (case- and non-case-carrying), supervisors, managers, and administrators is nearly 43 years; for IV-E participants from the same positions it is almost 39 years.

Demographic information on Social Workers, Supervisors, Managers, & Administrators

Race/Ethnicity	All Respondents		IV-E MSW Respondents Only	
	Proportion n= 2358 (%)	Average Age (years)	Proportion n = 837 (%)	Average Age (years)
African American	9.9	42.77	10.3	40.87
American Indian	0.9	47.67	2.2	44.69
Asian American/Asian	5.0	39.36	7.9	35.98
Hispanic/Latino(a)	14.0	40.29	17.6	37.82
Mexican American/Chicano(a)	10.7	39.31	15.0	36.78
Native Hawaiian/other Pacific Islander	0.03	36.43	1.2	38.86
White/Caucasian	51.6	45.72	37.9	40.17
Biracial/ethnic	4.5	40.62	1.8	33.07
Multiracial/ethnic	2.3	41.43	3.5	38.38
Other	0.08	45.11	2.7	39.59
Total Percentage/Grand Mean	99.0% (error due to rounding)	42.66	100.1% (error due to rounding)	38.89

III. Staff Ethnicity compared to the Children with Substantiated Allegations and First Entries into Foster Care

One of CalSWEC's goals is to help diversify the workforce. Consequently CalSWEC's mission has been to actively recruit students who represent the children and families in the child welfare system.

The next table compares the racial/ethnic make-up of the children with their proportion of substantiated allegations of child abuse/neglect and first entries into foster care for the year ending on June 30, 2011, to the

racial/ethnic make-up of the child welfare staff.⁵ The number of allegations was reported by 90% of the counties for the year ending on June 30, 2011. This table does not include American Indian children in care of the Tribes.

The proportion of *White IV-E child welfare workers* is less than that of the *White non-IV-E child welfare workers*. The proportions of IV-E educated workers who identify as *Hispanic/Latino/Mexican American/Chicano*, *American Indian/Native American*, or *Asian American/ Pacific Islander* are greater than the proportions of those ethnicities in the non IV-E sample of child welfare workers.⁶

The corresponding *IV-E* and *non-IV-E* staff proportions are still below the proportions of *Black* and *Hispanic* children in care. The workforce implications are that there is still work to be done to provide workers who reflect the child welfare population, particularly the *Black/African American* and *Hispanic/Latino/Mexican American/Chicano* populations. Workers identify as *Bi-,Multi-racial*, and *Other* but there is no such category in the Child Welfare Services Reports data at this time.

Staff Ethnicity compared to the Children with Substantiated Allegations and First Entries into Foster Care (as of July 1, 2011)

Child Racial/Ethnic Group	Proportion of children with substantiated allegations (n= 89,766)	Proportion of children with first entries into foster care (n = 25,140)	Proportion of NON IV-E child welfare social workers & supervisors	Proportion of IV-E child welfare social workers & supervisors
Black/African American	.14	.18	.13	.12
White	.25	.27	.47	.41
Hispanic	.54	.51	.30	.36
Asian/P.I.	.03	.03	.06	.09
American Indian/Native American	.01	.01	.02	.02
Missing	.03	.00		
Bi-racial, Multi-racial, and Other			.07	.08
Total	1.0	1.0		

⁵ Needell, B., Webster, D., Armijo, M., Lee, S., Dawson, W., Magruder, J., Exel, M., Cuccaro-Alamin, S., Putnam-Hornstein, E., Williams, D., Simon, V., Hamilton, D., Lou, C., Peng, C., Moore, M., King, B., Henry, C., & Nuttbrock, A. (2012). *Child Welfare Services Reports for California*. Retrieved 8/13/2012, from University of California at Berkeley Center for Social Services Research website. URL: http://cssr.berkeley.edu/ucb_childwelfare

⁶ Respondents were allowed to check more than one ethnicity/race and about 5.3% of them did.

IV. Educational Degrees by Job Positions

Educational levels for child welfare staff are not found in the same proportions throughout California counties or regions. However, those with general baccalaureates and those with specialized master's degrees (MSWs) are the most numerous.

Educational Level by Job Position 2012

Level of education	Other?	Social Work Assistants/ Clerical	Case-carrying Social Worker	NON-case carrying Child Welfare Social Worker/Trainer	Supervisor	Manager/ Administrator	Total
Other	1	1	6	2	2	1	13
High School	2	40	3	2	3	1	51
A.A. degree	5	46	33	10	11	3	108
Some College	8	125	18	15	15	8	189
B.A., B.S.	18	82	568	166	91	19	944
B.S.W., B.A.S.W.	3	4	133	25	16	5	186
M.A., M.S.	4	15	314	89	144	41	607
M.S.W., M.S.S.W.	3	6	764	124	254	79	1230
Ph.D. or other doctorate	1	1	21	9	10	3	45
Total	45	322	1860	442	546	160	3373

V. Regional Distribution of MSWs

The tables below shows the proportion of MSW degrees held by the case-carrying social workers and supervisors by region, comparing 2004, 2008, and 2011. In 2011, among case-carrying social workers statewide, 41.1% (764 out of 1860) hold MSWs. Among supervisors for 2011, 46.5% hold MSWs.

In 2011, the Northern and Central regions provided greater proportions of the responses than the proportion of workers in the population. The Bay area and Los Angeles provided fewer responses than their proportion in the population.

Proportionate distribution of MSW degrees for public child welfare case-carrying social workers and supervisors, by region, 2004, 2008 & 2011

Case-carrying Social Workers	2004	2008	2011
Region	MSWs	MSWs	MSWs
Northern	33.6%	30.9%	46.1%
Bay area	55.9%	57.7%	69.0%
Central	23.5%	24.2%	33.6%
Los Angeles	25.3%	27.0%	42.2%
Southern	35.4%	29.9%	31.9%
CDSS	n/a	81.0%	n/a
Entire State	36%	33.9%	41.1%

Supervisors	2004	2008	2011
Region	MSWs	MSWs	MSWs
Northern	46 %	56.1%	56%
Bay area	58.3 %	64.1%	58.8%
Central	35.1%	42.7%	48.3%
Los Angeles	49.4 %	30.7%	38.2%
Southern	27.6%	43.4%	40.7%
CDSS	n/a	100%	n/a
Entire State	45.1%	45.1%	46.5%

2011 Other master's degrees: When other positions are included in the analysis, among case-carrying social workers, non-case-carrying social workers, supervisors, managers, and administrators, the main findings are that 60.1% (1221 have MSWs, plus 588 have other master's degrees out of 3008 reporting) of the Individual Worker Survey respondents hold some type of master's degree.

VI. Service Assignments & MSW degrees

State regulations (see Section IX below) focus on educational level standards for case-carrying social workers and supervisors in emergency response and family maintenance services. Regardless, it is not common for counties to assign workers to emergency response cases only or family maintenance only. Additionally, the 24 hour/7-days a week coverage precludes that division of work. Most workers reported having several service assignments. The conclusion we draw is that there is no one-to-one relationship between service assignment and worker.

Social Workers', Supervisors', Managers' & Administrators' Current Assignments

	Non-MSW Respondents	MSW Respondents
Department	Frequency	Frequency
Intake/Information/Referral	453	240
Differential Response	140	97
Emergency Response	681	449
Dependency Investigation/Court Services	404	279
Family Maintenance	666	437
Family Reunification	679	398
Forensic Interviewing	77	54
Permanency Planning	534	408
Adoptions	139	229
Family Preservation	177	96
Licensing	77	41
School-based Services	80	27
Wraparound Services	128	81
Team Decision Making	333	209
A specialized unit such as one serving "medically fragile babies"	314	188

VII. Title IV-E Participation

The CalSWEC Title IV-E program supplies the majority of MSWs to the public child welfare system. In 2011, 57.6% of the 1230 MSWs in all positions report they have participated in a CalSWEC IV-E program; another 4.5% report they have participated in an LADCFS IV-E degree preparation program at the university level.

Newly Hired. Among the respondents to the Individual Worker Survey who have been in their current jobs for one year or less, 40.1% have participated in a IV-E MSW or BASW program.

VIII. Age & Experience

Non-IV-E case-carrying social workers and supervisors are older, on average, than IV-E respondents in the same positions.

Age (in years) for Case-Carrying Social Workers and Supervisors: IV-E compared to Non IV-E

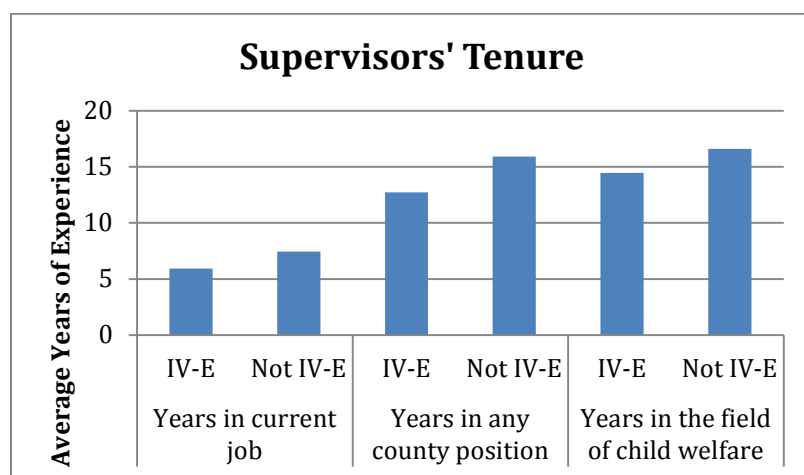
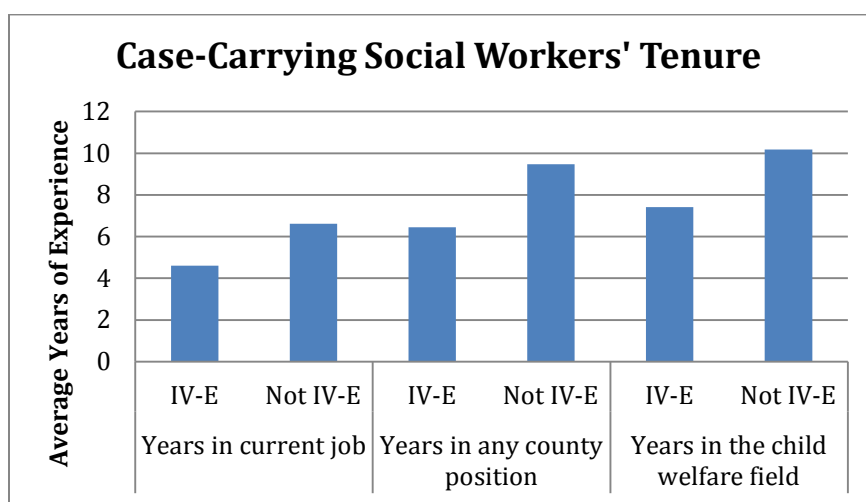
Age (years)	All	Non IV-E	IV-E
Case-carrying social workers	40.6	42.3	37.
Supervisors	46.9	48.4	43.2

Years of experience, or tenure, in the child welfare system is seen as an important stability factor, providing continuity of care to the families in the system and by inference, decreasing time in care.

For all professional respondents (case-carrying social workers, non-case-carrying social workers, trainers, supervisors, managers and administrators) the average tenure in the current position is 6.1 years; for time in the child welfare field it is 11.3 years; for time working at the county in any position it is 10.5 years.

Tenure for IV-E participants⁷ is slightly less than all others: For example, the average years of experience for case-carrying social workers who were IV-E participants is 4.6 years working in their current public child welfare positions, compared to 6.6 years for non IV-E case-carrying social workers in their current positions. Tenure for IV-E educated supervisors in their current positions is 5.9 years; for non IV-E supervisors, it is 7.4 years. It should be noted that having less experience is correlated with younger age on average. (See charts below)

Comparing Average Years of Experience for IV-E Social Workers and Supervisors to non IV-E Social Workers and Supervisors



⁷ IV-E participants participated in either the CalSWEC IV-E program (as part- or full-time students) or the Los Angeles Department of Family and Children's Services IV-E program. The CalSWEC IV-E program did not graduate MSWs until 1993.

IX. Methodology & Regulations

Although the methodology for this study has changed since 1992, the basic questions are: “How many social workers and other professional staff work in public child welfare agencies in California? What proportion of the professional staff hold master’s degrees in social work/welfare?” Two online surveys were used to gather the data.

First, the 58 counties were asked to provide census information about the population of professional active/encumbered child welfare staff positions, needs for MSWs, vacancies, and proportion of bilingual workers among the staff population. 55 counties responded with administrative census data. Three counties that declined to participate were located in the northern region of the state and have small populations. Since those counties responded in 2008, their 2008 data was substituted for the 2011 missing data when the proportions of MSWs were calculated. The missing data amounted to 0.457% of the total population.

Second, a web-based survey was sent to all individual workers in 55 counties⁸ by their child welfare or human resources departments to provide educational level, service assignment, position, race/ethnicity, age, years of service, needs for additional education, and training experiences. 3496 responses were received from workers from 54 counties. When matched to the proportionate distribution reported in the census data there were not significant differences. This means that the sample responses are representative of the distribution of child welfare positions in the state.

In all but four counties, all public child welfare social work assistants, social workers, supervisors, managers/program managers, and administrators were given the opportunity to respond to the individual worker survey. Social work assistants were included in this study because they can be a source of “home grown” social workers, and we wanted to gauge their interest in seeking additional degree education. Where appropriate, they were enumerated.

Goodness of fit tests⁹ were conducted to determine how closely the sample aligned with the population by region and by employee position, the only two variables common to both surveys. Results by employee position indicated that the sample generally reflects the population as reported by the counties. The oversampling of supervisors contributed almost all of the variance on this variable. Results by region indicated that more responses from the Central and the Northern regions contributed most to the positive variance in the sample, countered by fewer from Los Angeles and the Bay area.

The application and approval letters are on file in the CalSWEC Office and the University of California Berkeley Office for the Protection of Human Subjects. Copies of the surveys are available upon request.

California State Educational Qualifications for Child Welfare Staff

The Manual of Policies and Procedures, Division 31 Child Welfare Services Program, Regulation 31-070 states that “County staff who provide emergency response and family maintenance services shall meet the following qualifications:

⁸ One county declined to send the individual worker survey to its workers but did complete the census survey. Three counties declined to participate in the study.

⁹ Franke, T., Ho, T., & Christie, C. (2012) The Chi-square test: Often used and more often misinterpreted. *American Journal of Evaluation*, 33, 3.

Selvin, S. (1991) *Statistical Analysis of Epidemiologic Data*. New York: Oxford.

“.11 At least 50 percent of the professional staff providing emergency response services, and at least 50 percent of the professional staff providing family maintenance services, shall possess master’s degree in social work, or its equivalent in education and/or experience as certified by the State Personnel Board or a county civil service board.”

“.12 One hundred (100) percent of the supervisors of staff providing emergency response and family maintenance services shall possess a master’s degree in social work, or its equivalent in education and/or experience as certified by the State Personnel Board or a county civil service board.”

The standards for MSW social workers in Adoptions are located in the Community Care Licensing Manual Sections 89152-89155.

California Child Welfare Training Regulations

An All County Letter (ACL-08-23) from the California Department of Social Services delineates Child Welfare Training Regulations Effective July 1, 2008. Among the items addressed are suggested topics for training content for newly hired child welfare workers and supervisors in core training. This ACL also spells out requirements for 40 hours of continuing training for current workers every 24 months:

“.1 County welfare departments shall provide training to employees who are newly hired, transferred, or promoted to social services positions.” Authority Cited: Sections 10553 and 10554, Welfare and Institutions Code. Reference: 45 CFR 1357.15(t); Social Security Act, Title IV-B, Program Improvement Plan, and Section 16206, Welfare and Institutions Code.

These regulations apply to juvenile probation officers as well as child welfare workers.



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