

**State of Washington
Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee (JLARC)**



**Children's Administration
Social Worker Qualifications**

Report 08-3

January 9, 2008

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Committee Approval

On January 9, 2008, this report was approved for distribution by the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee.

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**CHILDREN'S
ADMINISTRATION
SOCIAL WORKER
QUALIFICATIONS**

REPORT 08-3

JANUARY 9, 2008



STATE OF WASHINGTON

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Report Summary

Children's Administration Social Worker Qualifications Study Mandate

The Legislature directed the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee (JLARC) to conduct an analysis of the qualifications required to become a Social Worker within the Department of Social and Health Services' (DSHS) Children's Administration, and to compare these qualifications to the qualifications used by other states for equivalent categories of social workers.

Legislators also expressed an interest in research related to child welfare worker job qualifications and asked for information about the education and experience of current Social Workers in the Children's Administration.

Social Worker Job Classifications and Qualifications

DSHS has four Social Worker classifications. Within the Children's Administration, the Social Worker 1 and 2 classifications are largely unused, the Social Worker 3s are 76 percent of all the Social Workers, and 14 percent are in the supervisory Social Worker 4 classification.

A Master's in Social Work (MSW) or an allied field is desired at each level, but is not required. A Bachelor's degree in a social or human services field is the minimum requirement. The amount of experience depends on the classification level, but case-carrying social workers are required to have at least two years of experience, one of which consists of full-time paid experience assessing risk and safety to children and providing direct family-centered practice services.

Current Children's Administration's Social Workers

Based on data supplied by DSHS, of the Social Workers 1, 2, and 3s in the Children Administration:

- 30 percent have been hired in the past two years, and half have less than five years experience in the Children's Administration;
- 42 percent have some education beyond a Bachelor's degree;
- 15 percent have Master's degrees in social work or allied fields.

Of the supervisory level Social Worker 4s in the Children's Administration:

- 84 percent have been at the Children's Administration for more than five years, but half have less than two years of supervisory experience within the Children's Administration;
- 59 percent have some education beyond a Bachelor's degree; and
- 42 percent have a Master's degree in social work or an allied human services field.

Comparing Washington's Job Qualifications with Other States and National Standards

JLARC compared Washington's Social Worker job qualifications against those in other states and against national standards. We found that Washington is one of 21 states requiring a Bachelor's degree in social work or a related field. Most of the remaining states accept Bachelor's degrees in any field. Only the District of Columbia and two other states require an MSW for their supervisory level staff.

In 2001, the Legislature directed the Children's Administration to seek accreditation. DSHS is using the Council on Accreditation, as are other states seeking accreditation, as the accrediting body. Forty of the Children's Administration field offices have met a sufficient portion of the Council's standards to be confirmed as meeting the standards. However, preliminary results show that 15 of these field offices did not fully meet the specific standards focused on educational attainment. In particular, many Social Worker 4s do not have the required MSW or comparable degree.

Conclusions

In our analysis of the Children's Administration Social Worker positions and similar positions in other states, and in a review of child welfare literature, we found:

- Very little research addressing child welfare worker job qualifications and no research showing a clear, direct connection between child welfare worker qualifications and child outcomes. We did find studies indicating that degrees in social work can help with staff retention which might improve child outcomes. However, the design and/or rigor of these studies are not sufficient to draw solid conclusions that a social work degree should be a job requirement.
- There is little in the literature about what constitutes a good balance of education and experience in job qualifications. Further, there is great variation in approaches states have taken.
- Washington State's Social Worker job qualifications are similar or more stringent than the child welfare worker job qualifications required in most other states.
- Washington State's Social Worker job qualifications have not been revised in 17 years, but based on data reported to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services there has been improvement in child outcomes over this time period. Experts believe that policy decisions regarding caseload and frequency of child visitations are more significant for child outcomes.
- The educational attainment of Children's Administration Social Workers, primarily for the Social Worker 3s, has been steadily increasing in recent years which may be attributable to the Child Welfare Training and Advancement Program and recruitment efforts.

Finding 1

The Council on Accreditation's human resources standard for supervisors requires a Master's in Social Work or comparable field. While this standard exceeds the current DSHS job qualifications for a Social Worker 4, the Legislature has mandated that the Children's Administration become accredited. Based on DSHS supplied data, only about 42 percent of the supervisory Social Worker 4s meet the Council's standard.

Recommendation 1

The Department of Social and Health Services Children's Administration should develop a plan and a timeline for ensuring that they continue to make progress on the standards established by the Council on Accreditation concerning the required qualifications for Social Worker job classifications with supervisory duties.

Finding 2

In conducting this study, we encountered problems with the accuracy of human resources data, specifically in the area of Social Worker 4 educational attainment. The data had not been kept current and the Children's Administration conducted a manual update of the Social Worker 4 educational attainment. Accurate data regarding the educational attainment of Social Workers within the Children's Administration is important management information to help meet accreditation standards and target advanced educational opportunities.

Recommendation 2

The Department of Social and Health Services should improve and maintain the accuracy of the Children's Administration human resources data for Social Workers, especially in the area of educational attainment.

BACKGROUND AND REPORT OVERVIEW

Mandate for a Study of Children’s Administration Social Worker Qualifications

The 2007-09 Biennial Operating Budget (SHB 1128) mandated that the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee (JLARC) conduct an analysis of:

- The qualifications required to become a Social Worker within the Children’s Administration at the Department of Social and Health Services;
- The qualifications used by other states for “equivalent categories of social workers;” and
- The “strengths and weaknesses of Washington’s qualifications relative to the other states.”

In addition, Legislators expressed an interest in two more areas:

- Research related to child welfare worker job qualifications; and
- Information about the education and experience of current Social Workers within the Children’s Administration.

Background on the Children’s Administration

The Children’s Administration received approximately 97,000 requests for services in 2005 and provided child welfare and licensing services through 44 local offices located in six geographic regions. Within the Children’s Administration, two operational organizations provide direct services: the Division of Licensed Resources and the Division of Children and Family Services, which includes Child Protective Services, Family Voluntary Services and Family Reconciliation Services, and Children and Family Welfare Services.

The Children’s Administration has approximately 2,500 employees – nearly three-quarters of whom are Social Workers. The Legislature recently funded more than 200 additional new staff positions within the Children’s Administration in an effort to help reduce the time it takes to respond to allegations of abuse or neglect and to make sure children are visited at least once every 30 days.

Social Worker Duties

While Social Workers may hold the same job classification such as a Social Worker 3, the actual work they do varies significantly depending on the program in which they work. For example, Social Workers have diverse duties such as:

- Screening and investigative services for reports of suspected child abuse and neglect;
- Planning and intensive treatment services for children and families who may need help with chronic or serious problems such as intensive medical needs;
- Adoption services;

- Crisis stabilization services and services intended to maintain the family as a unit and prevent the out-of-home placement of adolescents; and
- Licensing of foster care and group care facilities.

Study Methodology

We utilized a variety of methods to gather the information provided in this report. We obtained personnel data from the DSHS Human Services Division for the information, such as experience and education, related to Social Workers currently employed within the Children's Administration. We compared these data to similar data we obtained from the Department of Personnel. When we noticed inconsistencies about Social Worker 4 educational attainment from DSHS personnel data, the Children's Administration conducted a survey of field offices to provide updated information about the education of Social Worker 4s. Updated information on the education of other Social Worker positions was not available, and therefore this data may contain inconsistencies.

For information related to child welfare worker qualifications in general and in other states we researched studies on the topic and obtained information from state websites. Additional job qualification comparisons were made with a select group of states. We used an expert panel to help in selecting the comparison states and then used interview information from the states to analyze how the qualifications for similar child welfare worker positions in the selected states compare to Social Worker qualifications used by the Children's administration in this state.

Report Organization

This report covers four topic areas:

1. Review of research related to child welfare worker job qualifications;
2. Job qualifications to be hired as a Social Worker within the DSHS Children's Administration;
3. Information about current Children's Administration Social Workers such as education attainment and years of experience working within the Children's Administration; and
4. Comparisons of the Children's Administration Social Worker qualifications against:
 - The child welfare job qualifications in other states; and
 - National standards.

SOCIAL WORKER QUALIFICATION ANALYSIS

Topic One: Research Related to Child Welfare Worker Job Qualifications

Legislators expressed an interest in knowing if research demonstrates that a particular set of child welfare worker qualifications can lead to improved child welfare outcomes. We explored this question through a review of the literature on the subject and through consultation with an expert panel we convened for this study.¹ This section of the report summarizes the results of what we found about job qualifications in relation to:

- Child welfare outcomes;
- Child welfare worker recruitment; and
- Child welfare worker retention.

For the most part, the research we found related to child welfare worker job qualifications is dated, limited in design, too broad, or simply lacks the necessary rigor to be used for informing policy decisions.

Since the research suggested that certain job qualifications might be advantageous, but failed to clearly define the relative strengths and weaknesses, we asked an expert panel assembled as part of this study about impacts job qualifications might have on child outcomes, and the ability to hire and to retain staff.

Child Outcomes – From the literature review, we did not find research that shows a clear, direct connection between child welfare worker qualifications and child outcomes. Instead, worker qualifications and child outcomes are usually connected only through discussion of how qualifications can improve worker retention, which in turn can lead to better child outcomes. The experts cautioned against looking at child outcomes across states to reach conclusions about job qualifications because there are a large number of variables contributing to child needs and child outcomes. These variables make it difficult to weigh the direct impact of job qualifications on child outcomes. Some of the societal factors contributing to child abuse and neglect, the need for out-of-home placement, and in-home services include family stressors such as unemployment, poverty, and substance abuse. The experts indicated that these societal factors and policy decisions about caseloads and frequency of caseworker visits have much greater impacts on child outcomes than worker qualifications.

¹ See Appendix 3 for expert panel member information.

Recruitment and Retention – Within the limited research addressing child welfare worker job qualifications, issues of recruitment and retention, especially retention, receive the greatest attention. One study estimated the average tenure for child welfare workers at less than two years.² Nationally, the turnover for supervisors is around 12 percent annually, for foster care and adoption workers it is around 18 percent, and for child protective workers it is slightly more than 22 percent annually.³ Another survey found that it takes five to seven weeks to fill a vacancy.⁴

As an example, one study of child welfare systems by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) found that the well-being of children are put at risk by staff turnover resulting in staff shortages and high caseloads which impair the caseworkers' abilities to perform critical functions. Add to high caseloads, salaries that are not competitive or supervision which is poor, and child welfare worker burnout and turnover is likely to increase. This study also found that child welfare worker turnover disrupts the continuity of services, particularly when newly assigned caseworkers have to conduct or reevaluate educational, health, and safety assessments due to poor or insufficient information in case files left behind by others. Families may become hesitant to work with unfamiliar caseworkers, making it difficult to learn the history of the case.⁵

The expert panel agreed that the ability to recruit and to retain child welfare workers are important considerations in setting job qualifications. However, in the end, answers to questions about the relative value offered by different amounts and types of education and experience become largely subjective.

² Child Welfare, HHS Could Play a Greater Role in Helping Child Welfare Agencies Recruit and Retain Staff, page 5, GAO (GAO-03-357), March 2003.

³ November 2004 data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics as presented in the Report from the 2004 Child Welfare Workforce Survey, February 2005, American Public Human Service Association.

⁴ Findings from a survey conducted by the Alliance for Children and Families and the American Public Human Services Association of public child welfare agencies contained in Child Welfare League of America. (2001) The child welfare workforce challenge: Results from a preliminary study. Washington D.C.

⁵ Child Welfare, Improved Federal Oversight Could Assist States in Overcoming Key Challenges, page 12, GAO (GAO-04418T) January 28, 2004.

Topic Two: Social Worker Job Classifications and Qualifications

In this second topic area, we provide information about:

- Recent history of Social Worker positions;
- Current qualifications people must meet to become a Social Worker within the Children’s Administration; and
- Training obligations and opportunities for Social Workers after they have been hired.

Recent Social Worker Job Classification History

In July 1988, the Washington State Personnel Board approved a new set of job classifications and job qualifications for the Social Worker series. In the next few years, several changes to the minimum qualifications were made because of difficulties finding qualified staff. For example, in June 1990, the Personnel Board approved a proposal that would “broaden the minimum job qualifications for the Social Workers 1, 2, 3, and 4 classes. These changes will alleviate recruitment difficulties currently experienced by the agency.”⁶

The Social Worker classifications were unchanged until new job specifications were adopted effective July 1, 2007, but the new specifications are nearly identical to what was adopted in 1990. With the exception of the job qualifications changing from “Minimum” to “Desirable” no other changes were made. This was a general change and was not specific to the Social Worker classifications. However, Children’s Administration job announcements still include “Required Qualifications” and Children’s Administration states that hiring is done with these qualifications as minimums.

Qualifications to Become a Children’s Administration Social Worker

Figure 1 on the following page shows the education and experience qualification requirements, as posted on Children’s Administration job announcements, for the four Social Worker classifications. In addition, as part of the job requirements, all employees must successfully complete the formal training course sponsored by their division within one year of their appointment.

⁶ Presented at the Washington State Personnel Board Meeting June 14, 1990.

Social Worker Job Classifications and Qualifications

Figure 1 – Job Qualifications for Children’s Administration Social Worker Positions

| Social Worker 1 | Social Worker 2 | Social Worker 3 | Social Worker 4 |
|---|--|--|--|
| <p>A Master’s degree in social services, human services, behavioral sciences, or an allied field.⁷</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>OR</u></p> <p>A Bachelor’s degree in social services, human services, behavioral sciences, or an allied field; and one year of social service experience.</p> | <p>A Master’s degree in social services, human services, behavioral sciences, or an allied field, and one year of paid social service experience equivalent to a Social Worker 1 (a two year Master’s degree in one of the above fields that included a practicum will be substituted for one year of paid social service experience).</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>OR</u></p> <p>A Bachelor’s degree in social services, human services, behavioral sciences, or an allied field; and eighteen months as a Social Worker 1 since July 1, 1988 or two years of paid social service experience performing functions equivalent to a Social Worker 1.</p> | <p>A Master’s degree in social services, human services, behavioral sciences, or an allied field, and two years of paid social service experience equivalent to a Social Worker 2 (a two year Master’s degree in one of the above fields that included a practicum will be substituted for one year of paid social service experience).</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>OR</u></p> <p>A Bachelor’s degree in social services, human services, behavioral sciences, or an allied field; and one year as a Social Worker 2 since July 1, 1988 or three years of paid social service experience performing functions equivalent to a Social Worker 2.</p> <p>Note: At least one year of paid social service experience must be in assessing risk and safety to children and providing direct family-centered practice services (strengthening and preserving family units).</p> | <p>A Master’s degree in social services, human services, behavioral sciences, or an allied field, and four years of paid social service experience equivalent to a Social Worker 2 (a two year Master’s degree in one of the above fields that included a practicum will be substituted for one year of paid social service experience).</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>OR</u></p> <p>A Bachelor’s degree in social services, human services, behavioral sciences, or an allied field; and two years as a Social Worker 3 since July 1, 1988, or six years of paid social service experience performing functions equivalent to a Social Worker 2.</p> <p>Note: At least two years of paid social service experience must be in assessing risk and safety to children and providing direct family-centered practice services (strengthening and preserving family units).</p> |

Source: JLARC analysis of DSHS-supplied information and review of Children’s Administration Social Worker job announcements.

⁷ Fields that are considered to be allied include: counseling, psychology, human services, sociology, child development, human development, family studies, pastoral counseling, anthropology, gerontology, therapeutic recreation, and education. Also, candidates with degrees and a minimum of 45 quarter hours or 30 semester hours of social services related coursework are deemed to have met the education requirements.

Additional Education and Training for Social Workers

Job announcements for Children’s Administration Social Worker positions state that the applicant must complete certain required training within one year of being hired. Staff not completing the training can be dismissed. To help ensure that Social Workers have the education and training to perform their jobs, the Children’s Administration has undertaken two efforts: the Social Workers Academy; and the Child Welfare Training and Advancement Program.

Social Worker Academy – The Children’s Administration has instituted what is called the “Social Worker Academy.” All new employees, within 15 days of hire and before being assigned any cases, must go through training that includes classes in substance abuse, investigation and interviewing, child development, risk assessment, permanency planning, engagement, mental health, domestic violence, customer services, teaming, Indian Child Welfare and cross cultural issues, diversity, and Social Worker safety. In addition to these classes, employees attend classes specific to the program area in which they will be working. On average, the Academy is a six week program. All Social Workers within the Children’s Administration are required to complete 20 hours of ongoing training each year as well.

Child Welfare Training and Advancement Program – Children’s Administration encourages its employees who do not have an MSW to attend the federally funded Child Welfare Training and Advancement Program (CWTAP).⁸ In contrast to other MSW programs, CWTAP is designed to provide an MSW specifically geared for someone wishing to work within a child welfare setting. The goal is to enhance professional practice in child welfare and provide assistance to current and/or potential Social Workers.

Students can either be current Children’s Administration employees or prospective employees. CWTAP applicants must first be accepted into the general MSW program before being considered for CWTAP. Students may chose from full-time, part-time, day or evening programs, extended degree or advanced standing programs at Eastern Washington University or the University of Washington.

Currently, students receive tuition reimbursement and educational financial assistance. Graduates are then required to work full-time for the agency for a period of time equal to the period for which financial assistance was given.

Since its inception in 1992, there have been 548 graduates from CWTAP. Children’s Administration hired 167 out of 174 of the 2006 and 2007 graduates.

⁸ CWTAP is funded under Title IV-E of the Social Security Act. The federal government reimburses 75 percent of states’ training expenditures to implement educational programs for current child welfare staff and enhance the child welfare curriculum of undergraduate and graduate social work programs to better educate and prepare potential caseworkers.

Topic Three: Current Children’s Administration Social Workers

In this third topic area, we present information about the qualifications of the current Social Workers in the Children’s Administration including:

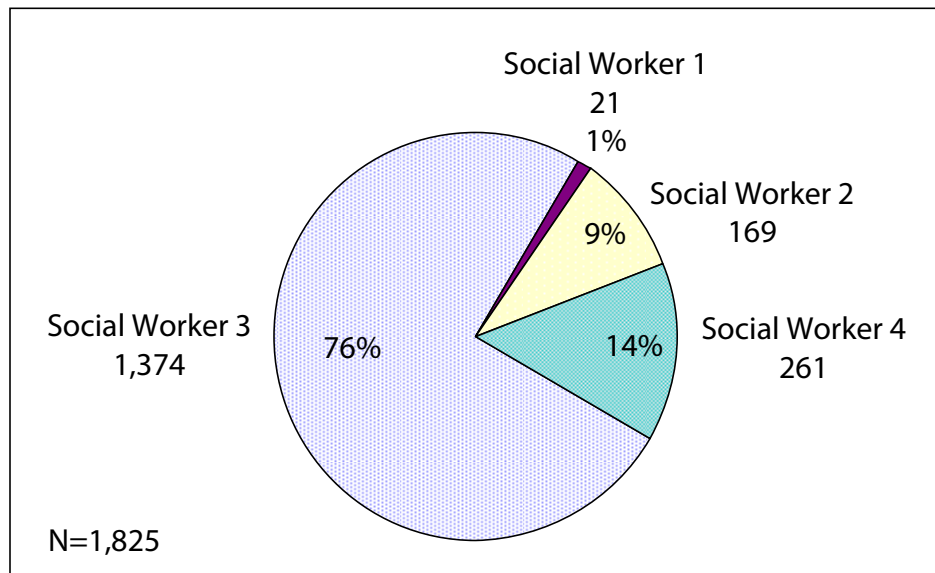
- The distribution of workers among the four Social Worker job classifications;
- Social Worker levels of educational attainment and job experience; and
- Factors impacting the supply and demand of the Social Worker workforce.

Distribution of Social Workers among the Job Classifications

DSHS uses all four classifications or levels of Social Workers, but Social Worker 1 and 2 are seldom used in the Children’s Administration. This is because DSHS established the Social Worker 3 classification as the “goal class” for caseworkers. DSHS decided that the minimum job qualifications and duties needing to be performed by child welfare workers in the Children’s Administration most clearly matched the job specifications of the Social Worker 3 classification. For this reason, the Children’s Administration attempts to hire all Social Workers as Social Worker 3s or with the intent that they will become Social Worker 3s after a probationary period. This is done so that good candidates who fall short of the job qualifications in one area – perhaps someone who just graduated with an MSW, but lacks enough work experience – can be hired as a “Social Worker 2 in Training to Become a Social Worker 3.”

Figure 2 below shows that more than three-quarters (76 percent) of Children’s Administration Social Workers are Social Worker 3s. Approximately one out of seven Social Workers (14 percent) are Social Worker 4s, the supervisory level.

Figure 2 – Three-Quarters of Children’s Administration Social Workers are Social Worker 3s



Source: JLARC analysis of Department of Personnel data from July 2007.

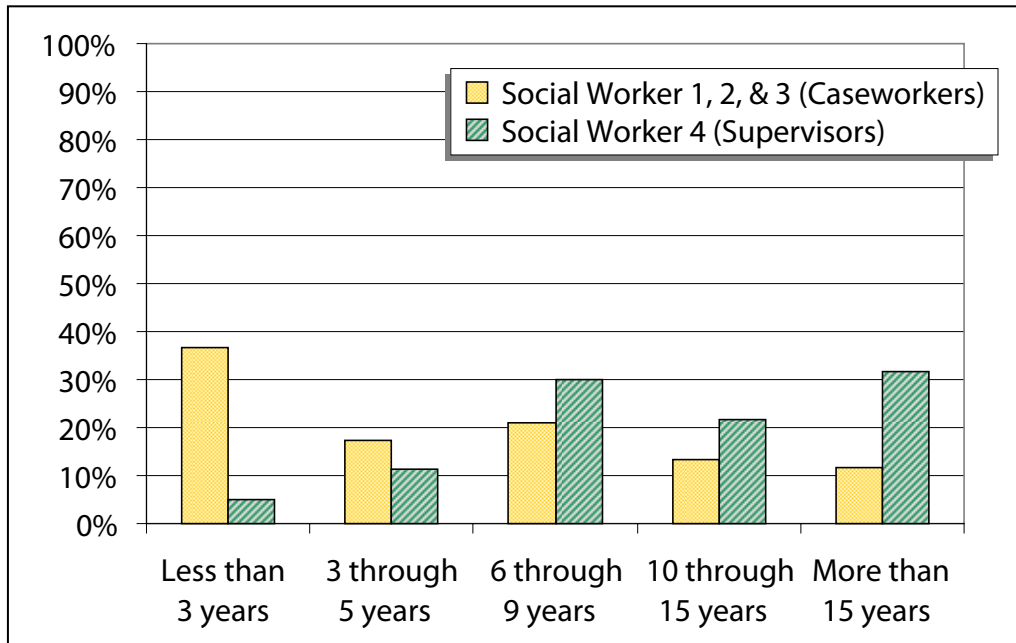
Social Worker Experience and Educational Attainment

Experience – Almost 38 percent of all the Social Worker 1, 2, and 3s have been hired in the past three years, but 25 percent have been employed by the Children’s Administration for at least ten years, bringing the average for all Social Worker 1, 2, and 3s to more than six years (compared to a national average estimate of approximately two years).

The supervisory level Social Worker 4s have largely worked their way up through the Social Worker system at the Children’s Administration and 84 percent have been employed in the Children’s Administration for more than ten years. The average length of service within the Children’s Administration for the Social Worker 4s is a little over 12 years.

Figure 3 below shows the years of experience within the Children’s Administration for the caseworker level Social Worker 1, 2, and 3s and the supervisor level Social Worker 4s.

Figure 3 – Social Worker 4s have More Work Experience at the Children’s Administration



Source: JLARC analysis of DSHS Human Resources data from September 2007.

Figure 4, on the following page, contains the average years of experience within the Children’s Administration for Social Worker 1, 2, and 3s and for Social Worker 4s by DSHS region. As Figure 4 shows, there are regional differences in experience. Region 3 Social Workers, both caseworker level and supervisory level, have the least experience compared to the other regions, and Region 4 Social Workers, on average, have the most experience.

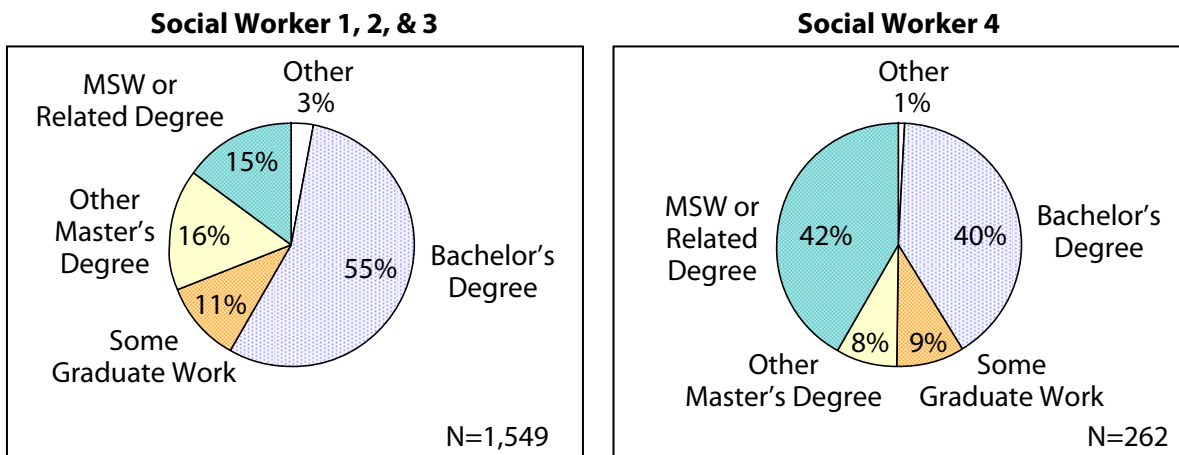
Figure 4 – Average Years of Social Worker Experience by DSHS Region

| | Social Worker 1, 2, & 3 | Social Worker 4 |
|----------|-------------------------|-----------------|
| Region 1 | 7.3 years | 13.2 years |
| Region 2 | 6.2 years | 11.2 years |
| Region 3 | 5.3 years | 10.6 years |
| Region 4 | 7.8 years | 13.4 years |
| Region 5 | 6.4 years | 11.2 years |
| Region 6 | 6.3 years | 11.7 years |
| State | 6.7 years | 12.3 years |

Source: JLARC analysis of DSHS Human Resources data from September 2007.

Education – More than 40 percent of the Social Workers 1, 2, and 3s have advanced degrees or some education beyond a Bachelor’s degree, but only 15 percent have Master’s degrees in social work or an allied human services field. While the number of Social Workers 1, 2, and 3s with an MSW has been steadily increasing over the past three years, a Bachelor’s degree in social work or a related field is still the predominate education level. Approximately 58 percent of the Social Worker 4s have advanced degrees or some education beyond a Bachelor’s degree. Based on data supplied by DSHS, about 42 percent of the supervisory Social Worker 4s have an MSW or a Master’s in an allied field – this is nearly triple the percentage of Social Worker 1, 2, and 3s with an MSW or a Master’s in an allied field.⁹ Figure 5 below shows the educational attainment within the Children’s Administration for the Social Worker 1, 2, and 3s and the supervisory level Social Worker 4s.

Figure 5 – Percentage of Social Worker 4s with MSWs or Related Degrees Nearly Triple that of Social Worker 1, 2, & 3s

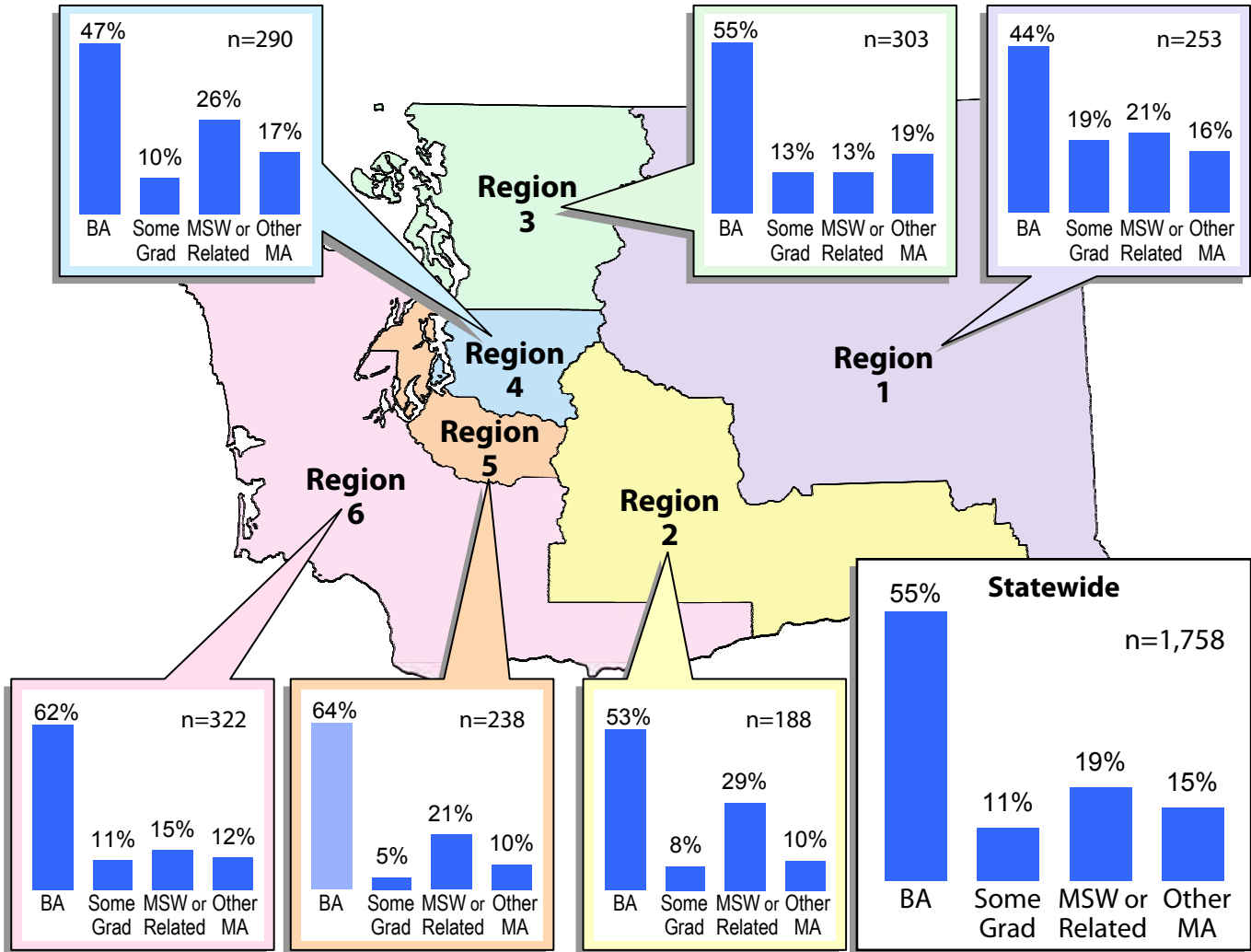


Source: JLARC analysis of DSHS Human Resources data (updated by the Children’s Administration) from November 2007.

⁹ DSHS Human Resources and DOP files show only 7 percent of Social Worker 4s with MSWs or Master’s in related fields. However, in response to this study, the Children’s Administration conducted a survey of all DSHS regions to update the educational attainment of Social Worker 4s. We are presenting the updated data as supplied by DSHS.

Figure 6 below shows the educational attainment of Children’s Administration Social Workers for each DSHS region. In particular, we noted that the percentages of Social Workers with Master’s in Social Work or related fields ranges from 13 percent in Region 3 to 29 percent in Region 2.

Figure 6 – Social Worker Education by Region



Source: JLARC analysis of DSHS Human Resources data (updated by the Children’s Administration) from November 2007.

Social Worker Supply and Demand Considerations

The demand for child welfare workers is dependent upon policy decisions (e.g., caseload), societal and economic factors, and staff turnover. The ability to fill vacant child welfare positions is dependent upon competition or demand from other market sectors for people trained in social and human services, as well as the size of the pool or supply of potential candidates with the necessary education and experience to meet the job qualifications.

Turnover – In the last 16 months, according to analysis by the Department of Personnel, 163 Social Workers resigned, retired, or were dismissed from the Children's Administration. This represents a turnover of about 8 to 9 percent of all Social Workers positions within the Children's Administration. This rate is below national averages which range from 12 to 22 percent depending on the type of child welfare work performed. While DSHS does not have figures for Social Workers specifically, they report that vacant positions at DSHS take an average of about 47 days to fill. DSHS also reports that the average cost to fill a vacant Social Worker position is just under \$4,700. This includes recruitment and selection costs, as well cost of the new employee training and sending new Social workers to the Social Worker Academy.

Future Demand – Nationally and in Washington State, the U.S. Department of Labor is projecting a faster increase in demand for social workers in the coming years than the average for all other occupations. However, much of this will be due to an aging population. There will be heavy competition for social workers in the areas of senior services and substance abuse, which may pull social workers away from child welfare services.

Supply – The social work programs at institutions of higher education in Washington State have averaged about 210 graduates with Bachelor's in social work and about 480 Master's in Social Work graduates each year over the past three years. There are more graduates with BSWs and MSWs in recent years than there are Children's Administration vacancies, but it is important to remember that many of the BSWs have continued on in school to earn their MSWs and many of the graduates with MSWs have elected to go into areas of social work other than child welfare. Additionally, some of the graduates have been Children's Administration employees who were taking advantage of the Child Welfare Advancement and Training Program. However, since the DSHS Social Worker job qualifications related to education allow for degrees in allied fields, there are other pools of potential candidates.

While job qualifications can impact the size of the eligible candidate pool and the length of time needed to fill vacant positions, the supply of potential child welfare workers can also be dependent upon other factors such as: the competitiveness of compensation, work environment, opportunities for advancement, and public perception of the positions.

Topic Four: Washington's Social Worker Job Qualifications Compared to Other States and to National Standards

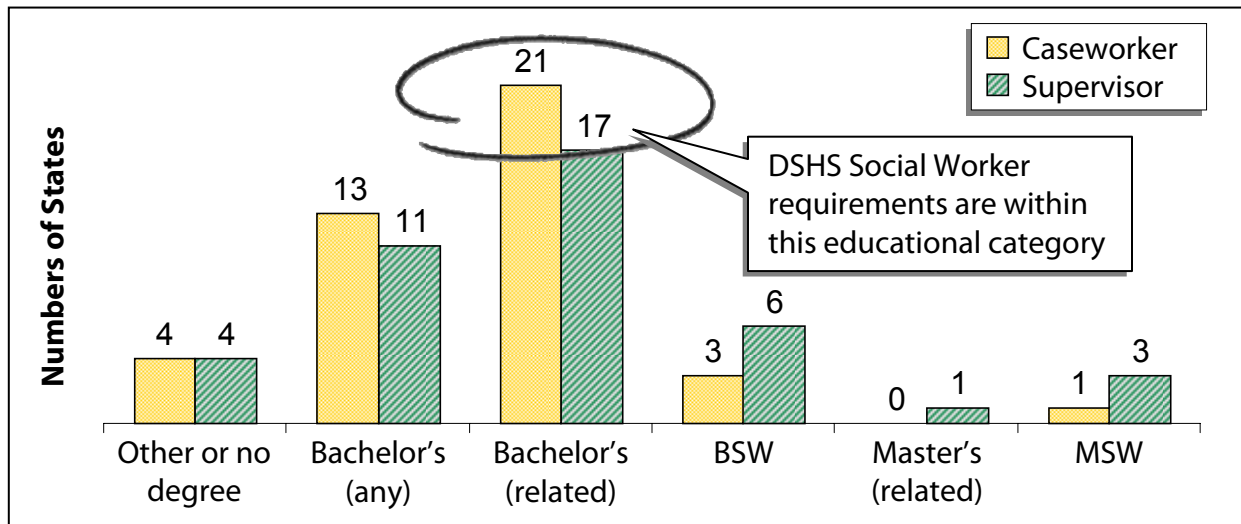
This last topic area provides comparisons of the job qualifications for Social Workers in Washington to other states and to national standards. Specifically, we report on:

- Job qualifications in other states and the District of Columbia, generally;
- A more in-depth comparison to a subset of states; and
- Washington's performance against two national standards, one for accreditation and a second that is a required federal review.

Job Qualifications in Other States

The Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) conducted a study of educational requirements for child welfare workers, supervisors, and administrators in 2004.¹⁰ The CWLA found that of the states responding to the survey, very few states specifically required degrees in social work. In fact, as can be seen in Figure 7 below, most states require a Bachelor's degree in a related field or allow a Bachelor's degree in any field for both caseworkers and supervisors. Only the District of Columbia requires an MSW at the caseworker level, and only the District of Columbia, California, and Illinois require an MSW at the supervisor level.¹¹

Figure 7 – Washington's Social Worker Education Requirements are the Same or More Stringent than Most Other States



Source: Child Welfare League of America survey data and JLARC interview data.

¹⁰ Child Welfare League of America, National Data System, online data reports, 10/09/07. Note: 39 states responded to the CWLA survey. We have augmented the results with information we received from three of our comparison states that did not respond to the CWLA survey.

¹¹ The District of Columbia reported shortages of social workers in their federal child welfare Program Improvement Plan dated 11/9/02.

Washington's Social Worker Job Qualifications Compared to Other States and to National Standards

Washington was one of the 21 states requiring a Bachelor's in social work (BSW) or related field for its caseworkers and one of 17 states requiring similar education for its supervisors. Job qualifications require a BSW specifically for caseworkers in California, Kansas, and North Dakota, and only Alabama, Idaho, Kansas, Mississippi, New Mexico, and North Dakota require a BSW for supervisors.

Comparison States

To get a better understanding of what other states perceive as important child welfare worker job qualifications, we selected seven states for more in-depth analysis. In this section, we describe what we learned about job qualifications in the comparison states.

Selecting Comparison States¹² – We used a variety of factors to identify potential comparison states including:

- How do the state demographics compare to Washington?
- Are the child welfare worker job functions similar to Washington (e.g., case management, assessment, brokerage to services)?
- Are child welfare workers state employees (rather than contracted out)?
- Are child welfare workers unionized?
- How were child welfare worker job qualifications established?
- Has the state received or is it seeking accreditation from the Council on Accreditation?
- Was the state a benchmark state in a recent Washington State Department of Personnel Salary Survey?

Our expert panel considered these factors and their knowledge of child welfare systems in other states to help select the following states for comparison purposes:

| | | | |
|----------|-----------|---------------|--------|
| Illinois | Michigan | Iowa | Oregon |
| Kentucky | Tennessee | Massachusetts | |

Equating the Child Welfare Worker Positions – In order to best compare specific job requirements, we equated the child welfare positions in each of the comparison states with the Social Worker 1-4 classifications in Washington according to four key job elements. The key elements included:

- Responsibilities associated with the position;
- Independent decision-making authority vested in the position;
- Level of supervision received by the position; and
- Level of supervision the position provides to others.

¹² Comparison state selection factors can be found in Appendix 4.

Washington's Social Worker Job Qualifications Compared to Other States and to National Standards

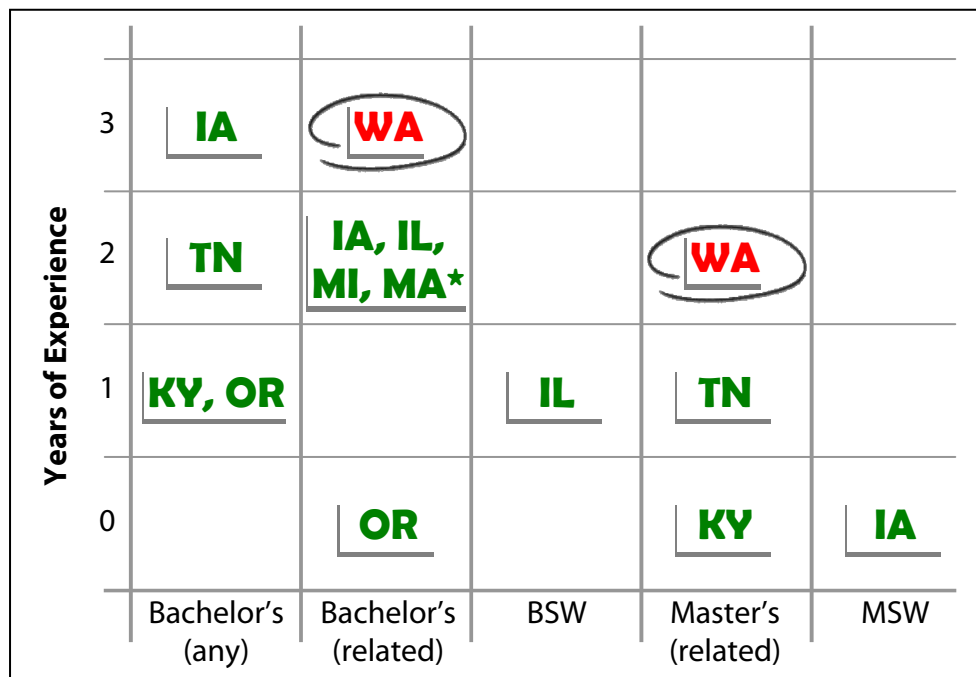
Job Qualifications Used in the Analysis – While there is a range of opinions on which job qualifications are most important, based on a literature review and discussions with experts in the field, we focused our analysis on the following job requirement areas:

- Educational requirements; in conjunction with
- Required experience;
- Licensing or certification;
- Post-hire training requirements; and
- Cultural competency.

We then used these areas to review the job qualifications for each child welfare worker classification in each of the comparison states.

Results of Child Welfare Worker Job Qualifications Comparative Analysis – The comparison states, similar to Washington, allow various combinations of education and experience to meet the job qualifications. For example, the job qualifications for the Social Worker 3 classification in Washington can be met with either a Master's degree and two years of experience -OR- a Bachelor's degree and three years of experience. We found that some states have four or even five possible ways in which a potential candidate might meet the job qualifications. This makes direct comparisons difficult. However, in Figures 8 below and Figure 9 on the following page, we focus on the education and experience requirements for the child welfare positions that matched up with the DSHS Social Worker 3s and 4s, the caseworkers and the supervisors respectively.

Figure 8 – Qualifications for Social Worker 3s Exceed Those for Caseworkers in Other States



Source: Child Welfare League of America survey data and JLARC interview data.

* Massachusetts' primary job requirement is licensure in social work or certification in child welfare. Education and experience are secondary.

Washington's Social Worker Job Qualifications Compared
to Other States and to National Standards

Caseworker Qualifications –As Figure 8 on the previous page shows, both of Washington's Social Worker 3 job qualification options are more stringent than most, if not all, of the equivalent caseworker positions in the comparison states. For each of the education "columns" where a Washington option appears, the amount of experience required is more than the comparison states' requirements. Likewise, for each of the experience "rows" where a Washington qualification option is found, the amount of education required exceeds the requirements in the comparison states.

According to the caseworker job specifications for all of the comparison states, a Master's degree in social work is preferred, but it is not a minimum requirement in any of the comparison states. Iowa lists an MSW specifically as one of the possible options for meeting minimum education requirements, but Iowa will also accept a Bachelor's degree in a related field.

Supervisor Qualifications –As Figure 9 below shows, both of Washington's Social Worker 4 job requirement options are more stringent than most, if not all, of the equivalent supervisor positions in comparison states. For each of the education "columns," where a Washington option appears, the amount of experience required is more than what is required in the other states. Likewise, for each of the experience "rows" where a Washington option is found, the amount of education required exceeds the qualifications of the comparison states.

Figure 9 – Qualifications for Social Worker 4s Exceed Those for Supervisors in Other States

| | | | | | |
|---------------------|---|---------------------|-------------------------|-----------|-----------------------|
| Years of Experience | 6 | | <u>WA</u> | | |
| | 5 | | | | |
| | 4 | <u>IA, TN</u> | | <u>WA</u> | |
| | 3 | <u>KY</u> | | <u>IA</u> | |
| | 2 | | <u>MI, MA*</u> | <u>TN</u> | |
| | 1 | <u>OR</u> | | <u>KY</u> | <u>IA, IL</u> |
| | 0 | | <u>OR</u> | | |
| | | Bachelor's (any) | Bachelor's (related) | BSW | Master's (related) |
| | | | | MSW | |

Source: Child Welfare League of America survey data and JLARC interview data.

* Massachusetts' primary job requirement is licensure in social work or certification in child welfare. Education and experience are secondary.

Washington's Social Worker Job Qualifications Compared to Other States and to National Standards

According to the job specifications, for all of the comparison states, a Master's degree in social work is preferred for the supervisory level, but Illinois is the only state that actually requires an MSW for its child welfare supervisors – Illinois does not have another option for meeting the supervisory education requirement. Iowa lists an MSW as one of the possible options for meeting the supervisory level minimum education requirements, but Iowa will also accept a Bachelor's degree in social work as well.

We did note that Washington's caseworker level Social Worker 3 job qualifications are the same or exceed the qualifications for the supervisor levels in several of the comparison states.

Other Qualifications – While we focused our analysis on child welfare worker education and experience requirements, we did look at licensing/certification, post-hire training, and cultural competency. We found a few differences and many similarities.

In Massachusetts, the primary qualification sought in candidates to fill both the caseworker and the supervisory positions is licensure in social work or a certificate in child welfare. No other comparison state has a licensure or certification requirement. In Illinois, licensure is required for some specific positions, but is not required of caseworkers or supervisors generally. Certification is not required in Kentucky, but can substitute for one year of experience.

All of the comparison states require post-hiring training, similar to the DSHS Social Worker Academy, after the child welfare worker has been hired. However, the amount and nature of the training varies widely. Washington is the only state, of the comparison states, that lists the required training in the job specifications.

While many states list certain cultural competency or language requirements for jobs in specific areas or with specific duties, Massachusetts was the only comparison state to mention cultural competency in their position descriptions. Washington's Social Worker job specifications do not address cultural competencies, but some job announcements require certain cultural knowledge or skills or have dual language requirements.

Social Worker Qualifications Compared to National Standards

Besides comparing the DSHS Social Worker job qualifications with those of other states, we also compared the job qualifications and training with two national standards: the Council on Accreditation for Children and Family Services (Council); and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Children's Administration Child and Family Services Reviews.

Accreditation of Children's Administration – In 2001, the Legislature directed the Children's Administration to seek accreditation.¹³ DSHS selected the Council on Accreditation, a non-profit organization, with nationally recognized standards in the delivery of child welfare services including a 4-year certification process, as the accrediting body.

¹³ RCW 74.13.013 requires that Children's Administration become accredited and RCW 74.13.017 set a goal date for completing the process of accreditation by July 2006.

Washington's Social Worker Job Qualifications Compared to Other States and to National Standards

The Council has developed standards for best practices across multiple areas including human resources.¹⁴ The Council's human resources requirements state that child welfare caseworkers should have, at a minimum, a:

- Master's degree in social work or a comparable human services field from an accredited institution and two years of direct practice experience; or
- Bachelor's degree in social work or a comparable human services field, and supervision by a qualified supervisor.¹⁵

The DSHS job qualifications for the Social Worker 3, the case-carrying classification, meet the Council standards. However, the Council standards indicate child welfare supervisors should have an advanced degree from an accredited social work program or a comparable human services field and at least two years of direct practice experience in services to families and children. The DSHS job qualifications for the Social Worker 4 classification do not meet the COA standards.

As of July 2007, the Children's Administration Headquarters and 32 of the 44 field offices had met a sufficient portion of the Council's accreditation standards. Additional field offices have since been evaluated and the entire process is expected to be completed by March 2008. However, based on the initial review, 15 of the first 32 field offices did not meet the specific accreditation standards for personnel job qualifications. The primary shortcoming was the lack of a Master's degree in social work or a comparable field for many of the supervisory staff. Only 110 of the 262 supervisor level Social Worker 4s have Master's degrees in social work or a comparable field. DSHS is attempting to improve this by encouraging supervisors who lack a Master's degree in social work to enroll in the Child Welfare Training and Advancement Program.

Children's Administration Child and Family Services Reviews – A second national benchmark related to child welfare staff comes from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Children's Bureau. The Children's Bureau requires that states complete the Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSR) every three years. The CFSR is a performance-based review that examines the delivery of child welfare services and the outcomes for children and families served by child protective services, foster care, adoption, and other related programs.

¹⁴ Child Welfare, HHS Could Play a Greater Role in Helping Child Welfare Agencies Recruit and Retain Staff, page 1-2, GAO (GAO-03-357), March 2003.

¹⁵ Council on Accreditation's 7th Edition, Version 1.0 of Standards of Care for Child Protection Services, Foster and Kinship Care, and Adoption Services for Public Agencies. The standards for child protective workers (S10.7), foster and kinship workers (S21.11), and adoption workers (S14.10) are identical except for types of experience required. An 8th Edition of the standards has been published, but DSHS and COA have agreed to use the 7th Edition for the initial accreditation process.

Washington's Social Worker Job Qualifications Compared to Other States and to National Standards

The Children's Bureau was concerned that caseworkers in many states lacked education in child welfare, and decided to address this concern through an emphasis on training. The CFSR Statewide Assessment Instrument includes two items focused on improving the training states provide to their child welfare workers: initial staff training, and ongoing staff training. Included in these assessment items, each state is evaluated on:

- Whether training was provided to all staff, including supervisors and managers;
- The content, amount, and quality of the training; and
- How training is reflected in job performance.

DSHS's Children's Administration has met these systemic assessment items through new employee and ongoing training requirements, courses offered through the Social Worker Academy, and to some degree, through the Child Welfare Training and Advancement Program. The Children's Administration's next CFSR is scheduled for 2009.

Conclusions, Findings, and Recommendations

In our analysis of the Children's Administration Social Worker positions, similar positions in other states, and in a review of child welfare literature, we found:

- There is very little research addressing child welfare worker job qualifications and no research showing a clear, direct connection between child welfare worker qualifications and child outcomes. We did find studies indicating that degrees in social work, particularly a Master's in Social Work (especially if there is a concentration in child welfare coursework and a practicum), can help with staff retention, which might improve child outcomes. However, the design and/or rigor of these studies are not sufficient to draw solid conclusions that a social work degree should be a job requirement.
- There is little in the literature about what constitutes a good balance of education and experience in job qualifications. Further, there is great variation in approaches states have taken.
- Washington State's Social Worker job qualifications are similar or more stringent than the child welfare worker job qualifications required in most other states.
- Washington State's Social Worker job qualifications have not been revised in 17 years, but based on data reported to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services there has been improvement in child outcomes over this time period. Experts believe that policy decisions regarding caseload and frequency of child visitations are more significant for child outcomes.
- The educational attainment of Children's Administration Social Workers, primarily for the Social Worker 3s, has been steadily increasing in recent years. This may be attributable to the Child Welfare Training and Advancement Program and recruitment efforts.

Finding 1

The Council on Accreditation's human resources standard for supervisors requires a Master's in Social Work or comparable field. While this standard exceeds the current DSHS job qualifications for a Social Worker 4, the Legislature has mandated that the Children's Administration become accredited. Based on DSHS supplied data, only about 42 percent of the supervisory Social Worker 4s meet the Council's standard.

Recommendation 1

The Department of Social and Health Services Children's Administration should develop a plan and a timeline for ensuring that they continue to make progress on the standards established by the Council on Accreditation concerning the required qualifications for Social Worker job classifications with supervisory duties.

| | |
|------------------------------|------------|
| Legislation Required: | None |
| Fiscal Impact: | None |
| Reporting Date: | March 2008 |

Finding 2

In conducting this study, we encountered problems with the accuracy of human resources data, specifically in the area of Social Worker 4 educational attainment. The data had not been kept current and the Children's Administration conducted a manual update of the Social Worker 4 educational attainment. Accurate data regarding the educational attainment of Social Workers within the Children's Administration is important management information to help meet accreditation standards and target advanced educational opportunities.

Recommendation 2

The Department of Social and Health Services should improve and maintain the accuracy of the Children's Administration human resources data for Social Workers, especially in the area of educational attainment.

| | |
|------------------------------|---------------|
| Legislation Required: | None |
| Fiscal Impact: | Minimal |
| Reporting Date: | November 2008 |

APPENDIX 1 – SCOPE AND OBJECTIVES

COMPARING SOCIAL WORKER QUALIFICATIONS IN DSHS CHILDREN’S ADMINISTRATION TO SIMILAR POSITIONS IN OTHER STATES

SCOPE AND OBJECTIVES

AUGUST 23, 2007



STATE OF WASHINGTON
JOINT LEGISLATIVE AUDIT AND
REVIEW COMMITTEE

STUDY TEAM

John Bowden

PROJECT SUPERVISOR

Keenan Konopaski

LEGISLATIVE AUDITOR

Ruta Fanning

Joint Legislative Audit & Review
Committee
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Olympia, WA 98501-2323
(360) 786-5171
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Website: www.jlarc.leg.wa.gov
e-mail: neff.barbara@leg.wa.gov

Why a JLARC Analysis of the Qualifications Required to Become a Social Worker?

The 2007-09 Biennial Operating Budget (Substitute House Bill 1128) directs the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee (JLARC) to conduct an analysis of the qualifications required to become a social worker within the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) Children's Administration.

Background

The Children's Administration within DSHS provides services to vulnerable children up to 18 years of age and their families through 44 local offices located in six geographic regions.

Social workers in these local offices have responsibilities in areas such as investigation of child abuse and neglect complaints, child protection, family preservation, family reconciliation, licensing foster homes and other out-of-home care facilities for children, and adoption services for children in the care of the state.

The Children's Administration employs nearly 2,500 full-time equivalents (FTEs); of these more than 1,800 are social worker positions. In Fiscal Year 2006, the Children's Administration received about 96,000 requests for services and social workers investigated more than 37,000 possible cases of child abuse or neglect. The Legislature recently funded 191 new staff in the Children's Administration in an effort to help them reduce the time to respond to abuse or neglect allegations.

Services provided by the Children's Administration have recently been investigated by the Joint Task Force on Administration and Delivery of Services to Children and Families and the Joint Task Force on Child Safety for Children in Child Protective Services or Child Welfare Services Custody. In addition, the Children's Administration has been the focus of reviews by the Governor's Government Management Accountability and Performance (GMAP) process.

Study Scope

As directed by the Legislature, JLARC will conduct an analysis of the qualifications to become a social worker required by DSHS Children's Administration and the qualifications used by other states for equivalent categories of social workers. The study will then assess the Children's Administration social worker qualifications in comparison with the qualifications required by other states to determine the relative strengths and weaknesses of Washington's qualifications.

Study Objectives

JLARC will provide a comparative analysis of the qualifications to become a social worker in DSHS Children’s Administration relative to the qualifications in other states by answering the following questions:

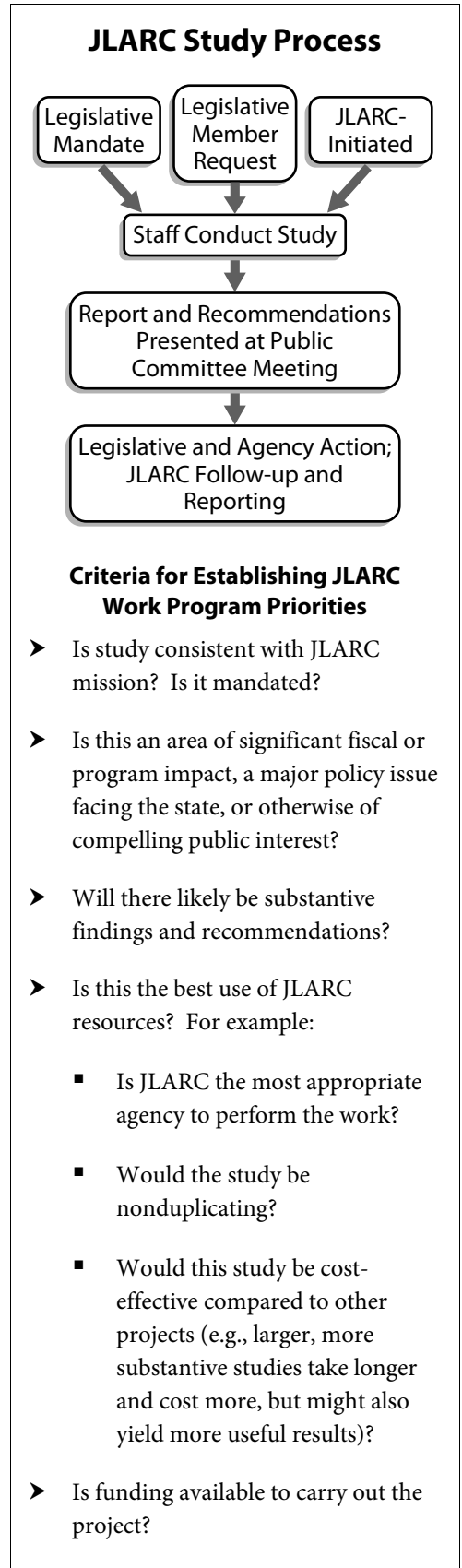
1. What are the qualifications of social workers currently employed within the Children’s Administration (e.g., levels of education and experience)?
2. What are the qualifications required to become a social worker within the Children’s Administration?
3. What are the qualifications of other states for their children’s services social worker categories?
4. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the Children’s Administration social worker qualifications compared to similar social worker categories in other states?

Timeframe for the Study

Staff will present the preliminary report in November 2007 and the proposed final report in January 2008.

JLARC Staff Contact for the Study

John Bowden (360) 786-5298 bowden.john@leg.wa.gov



APPENDIX 2 – AGENCY RESPONSES

- Department of Social and Health Services
- Office of Financial Management



STATE OF WASHINGTON

**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL AND HEALTH SERVICES
P.O. Box 45010, Olympia, Washington 98504-5010**

December 5, 2007

TO: Ms. Ruta Fanning, Legislative Auditor
Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee

FROM: Robin Arnold-Williams, Secretary
Department of Social and Health Services

RE: **Children’s Administration Social Worker Qualifications – Preliminary Report**

We appreciate the thorough review of DSHS Children’s Administration Social Worker qualifications compared with the qualifications used by other states for Social Workers. The conclusion that our Social Worker job qualifications are similar or more stringent than comparable requirements in many other states is encouraging. We continue to focus our efforts on improvement of child outcomes and emphasize having a well trained and qualified staff to meet these goals for child safety and well being.

Following are the responses to the specific recommendations in the JLARC Draft Report.

| Recommendation | Agency Position | Comments |
|------------------|------------------|---|
| Recommendation 1 | Partially Concur | <p>The Agency does not fully concur with this recommendation for the following reasons:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="802 1339 1377 1541">1. The Council on Accreditation (COA) does not require an organization to meet 100% of their standards. Rather, the COA standards are organized by themes, or chapters of standards. Being confirmed as meeting COA standards requires “passing a chapter” of standards at a high level. <p>Currently, Headquarters and 40 Field Offices have been formally “confirmed” as meeting COA best practice standards for public child welfare.</p> <p>The remaining Field Offices have completed their COA site visits and are engaged in the response process with COA. The target date for achieving</p> |

| | | |
|------------------|--------|---|
| | | <p>statewide Council on Accreditation is spring of 2008.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. RCW 74.13.017 states the department is to “...undertake the process of accreditation with the goal of completion by July 2006”. This is not a mandate for complete compliance with every standard but a requirement to complete the COA process for statewide accreditation. 3. The JLARC report indicates there is virtually no correlation between educational levels for supervisory staff and the quality of child outcomes. 4. Recruitment of Social Workers 4’s in Children’s Administration is currently a challenge resulting in small candidate pools. Creating mandatory MSW educational requirements will further decrease the available candidates to fill positions. We will continue to encourage staff without MSW’s to participate in the Child Welfare Training and Advancement Program (CWTAP). <p>(Current CA recruitment statistics show an average of only 10.5 qualified candidates available per position under recruitment. The Collective Bargaining Agreement gives management the right to consider up to 20 candidates per position.)</p> |
| Recommendation 2 | Concur | The information has been updated in the department’s database. The department now requires that this information is entered each time a Social Worker hiring/payroll action is processed. |

We would also like to comment on some potential misunderstanding of the accreditation process that may have led to issues about the JLARC presentation of the preliminary report in front of the committee on November 28, 2007. The presentation did not provide committee members with a clear understanding of the accreditation process. The presentation (slide 20) implied that if the administration did not meet the accreditation standard of all supervisors having a Masters in Social Work or a comparable field, that the administration could not become accredited.

In addition, slide 12 in the presentation led committee members to believe that if the administration did not meet the Masters Degree accreditation standard that the administration would not be in compliance with the legislative “mandate” of becoming accredited. The JLARC presentation stated that the “Legislature mandated that the Children’s Administration become accredited.” RCW 74.13.017 states “The department shall undertake the process of accreditation with the goal of completion by July 2006.”

Ruta Fanning
December 5, 2007
Page 3

While it is clear that the intent of RCW 74.13.017 is for the administration to become accredited, the statutory language does not mandate the Children’s Administration to “become accredited.” It does however mandate that the department undertake the process of accreditation.

The department believes that the statutory language in RCW 74.13.013 is even more significant because it describes specific elements of accreditation: “Standards require improved case management, documentation, internal case management practices, and accountability. Accreditation requires the establishment of clear communication with biological parents, foster and adoptive parents, providers, the courts, and members of the community.” RCW 74.13.013 does not specifically identify educational requirements as a “required standard”.

Again, thank you for your review and recommendations. Questions about this response can be directed to Keith Phillips 360-902-7912 or Linda Johnson 360-902-0777.

cc: Victor Moore, Director, Office of Financial Management
Cheryl Stephani, Assistant Secretary, Children’s Administration
Keith Phillips, Director, Finance and Operations Support Division, CA
Kari Burrell, Executive Policy Advisor, Office of Financial Management



STATE OF WASHINGTON
OFFICE OF FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Insurance Building, PO Box 43113 • Olympia, Washington 98504-3113 • (360) 902-0555

December 7, 2007

TO: Ruta Fanning, Legislative Auditor
Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee

FROM: Victor A. Moore, Director *V.A.M.*

SUBJECT: CHILDREN'S ADMINISTRATION SOCIAL WORKER ADMINISTRATION-
PRELIMINARY REPORT

Thank you for giving the Office of Financial Management the opportunity to review and comment on the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee's (JLARC) preliminary report on the Children's Administration Social Worker Qualifications. Here is our response to the recommendations.

| RECOMMENDATION | AGENCY POSITION | COMMENTS |
|--|------------------|--|
| 1. The Department of Social and Health Services Children's Administration should develop a plan and a timeline for ensuring that the required qualifications for Social Worker job classifications with supervisory duties are in compliance with the standards established by the Council on Accreditation. | Partially concur | <p>The Council on Accreditation (COA) does not require an organization to meet 100 percent of its standards. COA requires "passing a chapter" of standards at a high level. Currently, 40 of the 44 field offices have been formally confirmed as meeting COA standards.</p> <p>The report indicates that experts believe policy decisions regarding caseload and frequency of child visitations are significant to child outcomes. The Governor has made substantial investments in child welfare to reduce caseloads and increase social worker visits with children in care.</p> <p>The Department will continue to strive toward COA standards; however, we are concerned about establishing a mandatory Master of Social Work requirement as this may diminish the Department's ability to recruit Social Worker 4 staff.</p> |
| 2. The Department of Social and Health Services should improve and maintain the accuracy of the Children's Administration human resources data for Social Workers, especially in the area of educational attainment. | Concur | The Department has implemented procedures to maintain the accuracy of human resources information. |

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. If you have questions, contact Tammy Hay at 902-0553.



APPENDIX 2A – JLARC’S RESPONSE TO AGENCY COMMENTS

We appreciate both DSHS’s and OFM’s review of the Children’s Administration Social Worker Qualifications Report and their comments on the recommendations contained in the report.

Both agencies partially concurred with the first recommendation stating that the Council on Accreditation does not require 100 percent passage of every standard to achieve accreditation.

We know that the Council on Accreditation does not require 100 percent passage of every standard. However, we did not attempt to prioritize the standards or determine which standards it would be acceptable to not meet. Because qualifications of Children’s Administration social workers were the sole focus of this study, we assessed only the Council on Accreditation standards pertaining to social worker qualifications. Since currently fewer than half of the supervisory social workers meet the education standards from the Council on Accreditation, we believe a plan to improve the percentage of supervisory social workers meeting the standard is warranted. We have subsequently modified the language in our recommendation to clarify our intent.

The DSHS response also states that the “JLARC report indicates there is virtually no correlation between educational levels for supervisory staff and the quality of child outcomes.” We would like to clarify the point we are making. We are not saying there is no correlation. Rather, in our review of the research, we did not find any studies of sufficient rigor and scope that solidly demonstrate whether or not a clear and direct correlation exists between qualifications and child outcomes.

APPENDIX 3 – SOCIAL WORKER QUALIFICATIONS STUDY

EXPERT PANEL

National Experts

Richard Gelles, Dean, University of Pennsylvania School of Social Policy & Practice, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

- Ph.D. Sociology, University of New Hampshire
- Internationally known expert in child welfare and domestic violence
- Author of 24 books and over 100 articles, chapters, and papers on child welfare and family violence
- Co-Director, Field Center for Children’s Policy Practice & Research
- Director, Center for Research on Youth & Social Policy
- Holds Joanne and Raymond Welsh Chair of Child Welfare and Family Violence
- Influential in passage of the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997

Mark Courtney, Executive Director, Partnership for Children, University of Washington School of Social Work

- M.S.W., Michigan State University
- M.P.A., Northern Michigan University
- Ph.D., University of California at Berkeley School of Social Welfare
- Newly appointed director of a new initiative at the University of Washington School of School Work
- Former McCormick Tribune Professor, University of Chicago School of Social Service Administration
- Former Director, University of Chicago’s Chapin Hall Center for Children
- Former Associate Professor of Social Work at University of Wisconsin at Madison
- Areas of research include child protection, foster care, residential care, and adoption, professionalization of social work.

David Berns, Executive Vice-President for Child and Family Services, Casey Family Program, Seattle

- Provides strategic direction to Casey Family Programs’ nine field offices in Arizona, California, Idaho, Texas, and Washington and to its Indian Child Welfare (ICW) office in Denver.

- Directs Casey field office staff in foster care, kinship care, family reunification, guardianship, and adoption.
- Served as the Director of the Arizona Department of Economic Security; managed a staff of 10,000 employees and a budget of \$2.7 billion, leading Arizona’s Welfare Programs, Development Disabilities Services, Employment Services, Child Welfare, Child Support, Aging, and Community Services.
- Served as Director of the El Paso County Department of Human Services in Colorado; worked to integrate child welfare and public assistance systems.
- Served as director of two social services agencies in Michigan from 1978 to 1997. During his tenure, the state’s adoptions increased from 950 annually to over 2,000 through a contracting system that created a partnership between public and private systems.

State Expert

Dee Wilson, Executive Director, Northwest Institute for Children and Families, University of Washington School of Social Work

- MSW, Eastern Washington University
- Chair, Joint Task Force on Administration and Delivery of Services to Children and Families (Washington State)
- Twenty-six years experience with Children’s Administration as a social worker, unit supervisor, middle manager, and regional administrator
- Administrator for the Child Welfare Training and Advancement Program (CWTAP), the School of Social Work at the University of Washington

APPENDIX 4 – COMPARISON STATE SELECTION FACTORS

| State | Child Welfare Worker Functions | State Employee vs. Contracted | Unionized | How Are Job Qualifications Set? | State Demographics | Council on Accreditation | DOP Benchmark State |
|---------------|--|-------------------------------|-----------|---|--|--|---------------------|
| Washington | Assessment, Case management, and Service brokerage | State employee | Yes | Statute requires accreditation | NA | In process | NA |
| Illinois | Assessment, Case management, and Service brokerage | State employee | Yes | To meet Council on Accreditation standards | Larger percentage of African Americans | Accredited | Yes |
| Massachusetts | Assessment, Case management, and Service brokerage | State employee | Yes | Departmental reorganization | Similar | Application anticipated within next year | No |
| Oregon | Assessment, Case management, and Service brokerage | State employee | Yes | Union bargaining | Similar | No | Yes |
| Michigan | Assessment, Case management, and Service brokerage | State employee | Yes | Economic recession | Larger percentage of African Americans, smaller percentages of Latinos and Asian Americans | No | Yes |
| Tennessee | Assessment, Case management, and Service brokerage | State employee | Yes | Departmental reorganization | Larger percentage of African Americans, smaller percentages of Latinos and Asian Americans | In process | No |
| Kentucky | Assessment, Case management, and Service brokerage | State employee | No | Adjusted qualifications at times to meet needs for accreditation | Larger percentage of non-Hispanic whites | Accredited | No |
| Iowa | Assessment, Case management, and Service brokerage | State employee | Yes | State administrative committee's recommendations to meet best practices | Larger percentage of non-Hispanic whites | No | Yes |

APPENDIX 5 – CHILD WELFARE WORKER JOB QUALIFICATIONS IN COMPARISON STATES

| State | Job Title: Required Education and Experience (caseworker level shown first then supervisor) | License or Certification | Post-Hire Training |
|------------|---|---|--------------------|
| Washington | <p><u>Social Worker 3</u>: A Master’s degree in social work or related and two years of paid social service experience equivalent to a Social Worker 2 – OR – a Bachelor’s degree in social work or related field; and one year as a Social Worker 2 since July 1, 1988, or three years of paid social service experience performing functions equivalent to a Social Worker 2.</p> <p><u>Social Worker 4</u>: A Master’s degree in social work or related field, and four years of paid social service experience equivalent to a Social Worker 2 – OR – a Bachelor’s degree in social work or related field; and two years as a Social Worker 3 since July 1, 1988, or six years of paid social service experience performing functions equivalent to a Social Worker 2.</p> <p>Note: For a Social Worker 3 at least one year, and for a Social Worker 4 at least two years, of paid social service experience must be in assessing risk and safety to children and providing direct family-centered practice services (strengthening and preserving family units).</p> | No | 6 weeks |
| Oregon | <p><u>Social Services Specialist 1</u>: A Bachelor’s degree in social work or a related field – OR – a Bachelor’s degree in any field and one year of human services related work experience.</p> <p><u>Social Services Specialist 1</u>: A Bachelor’s degree in social work or a related field and one year of experience in child welfare case management – OR – a Bachelor’s degree in any field and two years of experience in child welfare case management .</p> | No | 4 weeks |
| Michigan | <p><u>Services Specialist 11</u>: A Bachelor’s degree in social work or a related field and two years of professional casework experience including one year as a Services Specialist 10.</p> <p><u>Services Specialist 12</u>: A Bachelor’s degree in social work or a related field and three years of professional casework experience including one year as a Services Specialist 11.</p> | No | 8 weeks |
| Illinois | <p><u>Child Welfare Specialist and Child Protective Specialist</u>: A Bachelor’s in social work and one year of experience – OR – a Bachelor’s degree in a related field and two years of experience.</p> <p><u>Child Welfare Advanced Specialist and Child Protective Advanced Specialist</u>: A Master’s in Social Work and two years of experience.</p> | Certain Social Worker III positions may require licensure | 11 weeks |

Appendix 5 – Child Welfare Worker Job Requirements in Comparison States

| State | Job Title: Required Education and Experience (caseworker level shown first then supervisor) | License or Certification | Post-Hire Training |
|---------------|---|---|--------------------|
| Iowa | <p><u>Social Worker 3</u>: A Master’s in Social Work – OR – a Bachelor’s degree in social work and two years of experience – OR – a Bachelor’s degree in social work or a related field and 60 semester hours of graduate education in social work or related field – OR – a Bachelor’s degree in any field and three years of experience – OR – one year of experience as a Social Worker 2.</p> <p><u>Social Worker 5</u>: A Master’s in Social Work and two years of experience – OR – a Bachelor’s degree in social work and four years of experience – OR – a Bachelor’s degree in social work or a related field and 60 semester hours of graduate education in social work or related field – OR – a Bachelor’s degree in any field and five years of experience – OR – any of the above combinations with one less year of experience if the experience comes as an Iowa Dept. of Human Services Social Worker.</p> | No | Variable |
| Kentucky | <p><u>Social Worker II</u>: A Master’s degree in social work or a related field – OR – a Bachelor’s degree supplemented by one year of professional social work experience – OR – a Bachelors’ degree in social work and successful completion of the Public Child Welfare Worker Certification Program.</p> <p><u>Social Services Clinician II</u>: A Master’s degree in social work or a related field and two years of professional social work experience – OR – a Bachelor’s degree and four years of professional social work experience.</p> | Certification is not required but can substitute for one year of experience | 12 weeks |
| Massachusetts | <p><u>Social Worker C</u>: A Bachelor’s degree in any field and two years of experience as a licensed social worker or after certification as a child protective worker.</p> <p><u>Social Worker D</u>: A Bachelor’s degree in any field and three years of experience as a licensed social worker or after certification as a child protective worker.</p> <p>For both levels, a Master’s degree in social work or related field will substitute for one year of the required licensed or certificated experience, a doctorate will substitute for two years of experience.</p> | Yes | 4 weeks |
| Tennessee | <p><u>Case Manager 3</u>: A Master’s degree in a related field and one year of professional experience in child welfare services – OR – a Bachelor’s degree in any field and two years of professional experience in child welfare services.</p> <p><u>Case Manager 4</u>: A Master’s degree in a related field and three years of professional experience in child welfare services – OR – a Bachelor’s degree in any field and five years of professional experience in child welfare services.</p> | No | Variable |

