



CHILD WELFARE STIPEND PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

PURPOSE

The Child Welfare Stipend Program is part of a statewide effort to invest in the education of selected students in order to attract qualified social work professionals into the field of public child welfare services in Colorado. Students who are awarded Child Welfare Stipends agree to commit themselves to public sector employment. They will be required to complete a specified term of “payback” employment in a Colorado county or tribal department of human/social services in a child welfare position serving Title IV-E eligible children and their families in exchange for receiving the Child Welfare Stipend.

The Child Welfare Stipend Program is available through Title IV-E of the Social Security Act, in combination with matched State funds. The Butler Institute for Families (Butler) administers the Child Welfare Stipend Program for the Graduate School of Social Work (GSSW) at the University of Denver (DU). The Child Welfare Stipend Program includes tuition support and participation in an internship as described below.

The Child Welfare Stipend Program is overseen by the State Stipend Committee consisting of representatives from the Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS), county departments of human/social services and the four participating Universities (University of Denver, Metropolitan State University of Denver, Colorado State University and Colorado State University in Fort Collins and Pueblo).

THE APPLICATION PROCESS

Written applications are reviewed and selected candidates are scheduled for interviews by an interview committee that includes representatives from the CDHS, Colorado County Departments of Human/Social Services, Butler staff, and GSSW faculty.

Applicants must be legal residents of the United States of America or legally authorized to work in the United States and provide proof of eligibility for employment, as required by 8 U.S.C. § 1324a. Applicants must be able to pass a Colorado Bureau of Investigations background check and be employable in child welfare. For more information about the requirements for employment with a Colorado county or tribal department of human/social services, please see: <http://co4kids.org/careers> or contact the Butler Child Welfare Stipend Program Staff.

NATURE OF THE AWARD

Child Welfare Stipends are provided to social work students who agree to accept, or continue, payback employment. Payback employment means one year of employment with a Colorado county or tribal department of human/social services in a child welfare position serving Title IV-E eligible children and their families per year of receipt of the Child Welfare Stipend (hereafter called Payback Employment). Based upon the needs of the State, the Stipend Recipient may be required to accept employment in a county designated by the State.

Upon award, Child Welfare Stipends will be applied directly to the Stipend Recipient's tuition each quarter. Stipend Recipient shall commit to an internship and Payback Employment, and will receive a Child Welfare Stipend amount determined in collaboration between the Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS) and Butler based on this commitment and the availability of Child Welfare Stipends.

STUDENT ELIGIBILITY

Full-time GSSW students are eligible to apply for funding if they are at any stage or location of the GSSW MSW program (e.g., On campus, Off campus- Distance Learning sites in Glenwood Springs or Four Corners, or MSW@DU online program) – If the student resides in Colorado and meets all other academic and field placement requirements; as applicable.

ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS

Stipend Recipients must successfully complete the entire MSW program, which includes specialized courses in, and related to, child welfare practice. In addition, Stipend Recipients shall plan electives with their academic advisor and the Butler Child Welfare Stipend Program staff to advance their skills in child welfare practice.

FIELD PLACEMENT REQUIREMENTS

Stipend Recipients must successfully complete at least one year of field placement (internship) in a county or tribal department of human/social services child welfare agency serving Title IV-E eligible children and their families. The University policy, and the level of the student, determines the number of field placement hours (480 hours for Foundation year students; 600 hours for Advanced Standing and Concentration year students).

County field coordinators will be notified of Child Welfare Stipend awards. It is the responsibility of the Stipend Recipient and field coordinator to make final field placement determinations based on the county-specific process, including securing an MSW field instructor and successfully passing a Colorado Background Investigation check. It is the Stipend Recipient's responsibility to notify the GSSW field team and Butler Child Welfare Stipend Program staff of the acceptance of an internship.

Stipend Recipients may complete the Colorado new caseworker certification training (Caseworker Fundamentals) within the intern cohort as part of their field placement unless already certified as a child welfare caseworker in the State of Colorado. They may also attend new caseworker training in a regular regional cohort, if space is available.

Stipend Recipients that are currently employed by a Colorado county or tribal child welfare agency may complete their field placement in their place of employment. They must accept a field placement that will enhance their ability to perform as an MSW professional in a child welfare setting, as determined by the Stipend Recipient and the child welfare faculty or field coordinator. Field placement activities must be discrete from employment responsibilities. Once the field placement activities are determined, they must complete the "Field Placement in Place of Employment" form and submit it to the GSSW field team.

DELAY OF GRADUATION

A Stipend Recipient who cannot complete graduation requirements because of personal hardship or disability may request a deferment for up to one academic year. These requests must be made in writing, submitted to Butler and then approved by Butler and the State Stipend Committee. At the end of the deferment period, the Stipend Recipient must return and complete his/her MSW education or repay the amount of the Child Welfare Stipend. Waivers of repayment may be made in the case of permanent disability or death. Waivers in other extenuating circumstances must be requested in writing, submitted to Butler, and will be considered by Butler and the State Stipend Committee for approval.

WORK REQUIREMENT

Stipend Recipients must obtain Payback Employment within two months of graduation.

Stipend Recipients receiving a rural/distance learning stipend have two months following graduation to secure employment in a rural Colorado county or Indian Tribal Nation of their choice in public child welfare. Rural counties are defined by CDHS. If employment cannot be secured in a rural county, a rural Stipend Recipient may take a position in an urban Colorado county to fulfill the Payback Employment requirement.

Stipend Recipients receiving urban stipends also have two months following graduation to find employment in any Colorado county or Indian Tribal Nation of their choice in public child welfare.

Stipend Recipients who are also county employees during the first quarter of their academic program must commit to returning to their county position for a period of one year for each academic year for which they receive a Child Welfare Stipend. The Payback Employment period begins from the date of the Stipend Recipient's graduation from GSSW. Should they choose to leave their county position before the Payback Employment period is complete, they must notify Butler and they are subject to the work interruption and repayment terms and conditions described here.

Stipend Recipients must accept interviews in any county in Colorado. If a Stipend Recipient is unable to obtain employment in a Colorado county within two months of graduation, they may request, in writing, a deferment from Butler, and Butler and the State Stipend Committee will consider the request. The deferment may delay Payback Employment for up to one year upon approval of Butler. The graduate must demonstrate effort to secure employment within that deferral year, e.g. participating in all interviews and accepting a job if offered.

Stipend Recipients completing their Payback Employment must provide personal contact information to Butler Child Welfare Stipend Program staff upon graduation and keep in regular communication with the Butler Child Welfare Stipend Program staff while in Payback Employment. This includes prior notification of any changes to employment including position or agency-level changes to ensure the changes meet the Payback Employment requirements.

WORK INTERRUPTION

A Stipend Recipient who voluntarily or involuntarily leaves employment before the required Payback Employment period is completed must either locate another Payback Employment position or repay the pro-rated, remaining amount of the Child Welfare Stipend. For example, if the Payback Employment period is one year and the Stipend Recipient works for six months, then the Stipend Recipient owes another six months in an eligible Payback Employment position or ½ of the Child Welfare Stipend amount received. However, the Stipend Recipient may be granted a hardship deferment of up to one year, in three-month

increments, with permission of Butler and the State Stipend Committee. At the end of the deferment period, the Stipend Recipient must return and complete his/her work requirement or repay the amount of the Child Welfare Stipend. Deferments or waivers of repayment may be made in the case of permanent disability or death. If the Stipend Recipient is laid off and cannot secure employment in a county in Colorado, Payback Employment may be deferred or waived at the discretion of Butler and the State Stipend Committee.

Stipend Recipients may request an extension in securing employment after the two-month post-graduation period is up. Extensions are given in three-month increments for up to one year. At the end of the one-year extension, Stipend Recipients will need to set up a repayment plan with the University.

REPAYMENT OF THE STIPEND

Stipend Recipients are responsible for repayment of the amount of the Child Welfare Stipend, interest, and any reasonable costs of collection under the following circumstances:

1. Failure to successfully complete the MSW child welfare program within two years of full-time academic study.
 - a. County employees must have approval of GSSW and Butler Child Welfare Stipend Program staff to extend time to complete coursework longer than two years.
2. Failure to meet any required security clearance screen to work with children and youth.
3. Failure to secure employment in a child welfare position within two months of graduation (unless a deferment or waiver is granted).
4. Voluntary or involuntary termination of employment before completion of the Payback Employment requirement (unless a deferment or waiver is granted).
5. Violation of the National Association of Social Worker (NASW) Code of Ethics during the internship and/or Payback Employment period.
6. Violation of University or GSSW policies during the internship.

Stipend Recipients who have completed a portion of their Payback Employment requirement will pay a prorated amount under the following circumstances:

1. Voluntary termination of employment before completion of Payback Employment requirement (unless a deferment or waiver is granted), or,
2. Termination of employment before completion of the Payback Employment requirement due to unsatisfactory work performance or improper conduct.

TERMS OF FINANCIAL REPAYMENT

There are repayment options available to Stipend Recipients to repay the Child Welfare Stipend. Stipend Recipients have the option of repaying the Child Welfare Stipend all at once or set up a payment plan. Payment plans vary depending on the Stipend Recipient's financial situation. Special circumstances are negotiated between the Stipend Recipient, the Butler Child Welfare Stipend Program staff, and the State Stipend Committee.

Waivers of repayment may be made in the case of permanent disability or death. If the Stipend Recipient is laid off and cannot secure Payback Employment in a county in Colorado, payback may be deferred or waived at the discretion of Butler, the State Stipend Committee and the Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS).

CONTRACTUAL OBLIGATION

Upon acceptance of the Child Welfare Stipend, Recipients will be required to sign a contractual agreement with the University of Denver and the Butler Child Welfare Stipend Program staff committing them to the terms and conditions laid out in this program description.