



Southern Connecticut
State University

501 Crescent Street
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School of Health & Human Services
Departments of Communication Disorders • Marriage & Family Therapy
Nursing • Public Health • Recreation & Leisure Studies • Social Work



Testimony in support of S.B. 322

AN ACT CONCERNING THE QUALIFICATIONS OF DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES EMPLOYEES.

In order to apply for positions at the Connecticut Department of Children and Families (DCF), potential applicants must have an undergraduate degree. Applicants with a BSW degree not only meet that requirement, they also come with a minimum of 400 internship hours (often at DCF), and coursework in professional values and ethics, knowledge about human development and behavior, and the skills to effectively interact with a diverse range of people.

Southern Connecticut State University's BSW program admits up to 72 students each year. Our curriculum includes a practice course on working with children and families in child welfare. This course prepares students for their internships. Southern's curriculum allows students to specialize in child welfare with the practice course, an internship at DCF, a corresponding year-long weekly seminar, and a second policy course. In addition, students can opt to minor in Criminal Justice to expand their knowledge about child protective services. DCF accepts 12-15 students/year from Southern, but there are always many more students who are interested in this internship.

Dr. Keenan, the BSW Coordinator at SCSU has taught the internship seminar for the past decade. Each year at least one seminar student who is interning at DCF raises concern about situations where they observed a DCF worker who does not have a social work education acting in disrespectful and/or unprofessional ways with clients. These behaviors include angry outbursts, devaluing and demeaning statements, and comments that reflect personal and cultural bias.

Our BSW students learn the Code of Ethics from the National Association of Social Workers (NASW, 2008). In all 42 credits of their Social Work program, they develop self-awareness and the ability to regulate their own thoughts and emotions. Students learn how to identify ethical dilemmas and use a decision-making process to guide their actions. They learn how to work collaboratively and seek supervision when necessary. Our students also learn engagement and communication skills as they videotape and analyze interactions in their practice classes. Instructors view these videotapes and help students develop effective and professional communication skills. Finally, BSW students must maintain not only minimum GPA's but also demonstrate professional abilities and attributes and conduct themselves according to the NASW Code of Ethics. Our student review committee screens out those who are not able to demonstrate professional knowledge and skills prior to graduation.

BSW graduates are a highly trained workforce well-suited to child protective service work. Those graduates who intern at DCF come to DCF job ready, with an additional familiarity of their policies and procedures.



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BSW and MSW programs across the state are ready to work closely with DCF to fill their workforce needs with qualified, professionally trained social workers. In fact, SCSU has been working with DCF for over a decade providing enhanced training opportunities for DCF employees through Title IV-E Child Welfare initiatives. Just this year, DCF has agreed to provide stipends to BSW students who complete the degree and commit to work for DCF.

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References

National Association of Social Workers (NASW). (2008). *Code of Ethics of the National Association of Social Workers*. <http://socialworkers.org/pubs/code/code.asp>



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