



## Frequently Asked Questions

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

Title IV-E refers to a section of the Social Security Act which provides funds for achieving the goal of improving the quality of care of children in foster care, reducing the number of children in foster care, returning children to their homes as soon as conditions permit, and facilitating the permanent placement of children who cannot be returned to their homes. These IV-E funds can be used towards social work education and training of new child welfare workers. Thirty-four states currently utilize title IV-E funds to train prospective child welfare workers through agency-university partnerships across the country.

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

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

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

The CWSP offers a maximum of 82 full-time stipends per year across the four partner universities. Capacity for new students fluctuates annually depending on number of students graduating or continuing in the program.

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

The stipend is \$10,000 per academic year for students enrolled in a participating full-time BSW (seniors only) or MSW programs. Stipends can be used to reimburse tuition, university fees, and books.

- **How are students selected to receive the stipend?**  
 Students must apply and be accepted into one of the participating schools of Social Work. Students should check with the appropriate university coordinator to understand CWSP application procedures and timelines in relation to general School of Social Work admittance timelines. Applicants submit an application available through each university's School of Social Work (on the School/Department of Social Work's CWSP website). At each university a panel comprised of university faculty/administration and LDSS representatives makes the award decisions. The decision is based upon the review of the application (including written responses to essay questions), references, and a panel interview.
- **What is the student's work commitment after graduation?**  
 CWSP Recipients are responsible for seeking and obtaining employment at a LDSS in a foster care, adoption, and/or in-home services role in Virginia no later than six (6) months following the date of graduation. The Recipient must maintain employment for one full calendar year (12 months) for every academic year that they received the stipend. For example, if the Recipient graduated from a participating MSW program and received the stipend for both years of the program (\$20,000 total), they would need to work for two full calendar years (24 months) at a LDSS.
- **What if I cannot find employment within the town/city where I reside?**  
 While it is ideal when qualifying positions are available in a Recipient's desired geographical region, the program commitment requires all Recipients to be willing to secure qualifying, full-time employment at a LDSS outside of the preferred region, within the specific timeframe (six months following the date of graduation), to avoid entering financial repayment. Recipients must keep records of all job application efforts, including copies of applications, email correspondence with potential employers, offer or denial letters, and so forth, to be made available upon request. Recipients should work closely with their University Coordinator throughout the job search timeframe in order to ensure they are meeting program expectations for employment searches.
- **In what circumstances would a Stipend Recipient have to pay back the stipend money?**

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

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

Prospective applicants should first contact the desired university directly. For any broad programmatic questions or additional questions beyond what the university coordinator is able to provide, contact the State Coordinator:

Child Welfare Stipend Program State Coordinator  
Virginia Department of Social Services  
[childwelfarestipend@dss.virginia.gov](mailto:childwelfarestipend@dss.virginia.gov)  
(804) 385-0963