

BASW CWTAP Graduating Student Evaluation Report | June 2026

Executive summary

This year's Child Welfare Training and Advancement Program (CWTAP) for Bachelor of Social Work (BASW) students included twelve enrolled participants from the University of Washington Seattle, University of Washington Tacoma, and Eastern Washington University in Cheney. The survey, administered by Partners for Our Children in Spring 2026, had a 100% response rate. While there were several changes and additions to the student survey, current findings are compared to those of the 2024 and 2025 cohorts throughout the report whenever survey items align. Overall, students provided positive feedback regarding various aspects of the program.

Highlights from this year's cohorts include:

- **Factors influencing CWTAP enrollment:** Students indicated that financial assistance and the opportunity to obtain specialized field unit experience were their top influencing factors for enrollment.
- **Perceived level of program support:** On average, students rated the perceived level of support across eleven program areas at 4.4 out of 5.0, indicating favorable levels of support are provided. The two highest rated items (4.6) related to: 1) the CWTAP practicum as a supportive learning environment, and 2) participation in a mock interview as a helpful practice to prepare for employment.
- **Best aspects of CWTAP:** Students felt the best aspects of CWTAP included professional development opportunities, the support they received from peers, instructors, and mentors, and the provision of tuition assistance with a professional position in child welfare after graduation.

"The field placement opportunities, mentorship from experienced professionals, and exposure to the child welfare system. Being able to shadow and learn from social workers in the field helped me better understand the responsibilities, challenges, and rewards of social work practice. The program also helped me strengthen my professional skills, including engagement, documentation, communication, and understanding policies that impact clients and families."

- **Likelihood to recommend CWTAP to prospective students:** The vast majority of students were *likely* or *very likely* to recommend CWTAP to other students. In open-ended comments, students noted the real-world learning opportunities in child welfare and the financial assistance provided through CWTAP as positive reasons to recommend the program.

I would recommend the BASW CWTAP program to prospective students because it provides valuable real-world experience that helps bridge the gap between classroom learning and professional social work practice. The program offers opportunities to gain hands-on experience within DCYF, build professional relationships, and develop skills that are directly applicable to future careers in child welfare and social services.

Several students who were cautious in their recommendations noted that other students should have interest and capacity to take on child welfare work, and that the current DCYF hiring freeze, which was implemented due to agency budget constraints in spring 2026, limits choices for where and when students will be employed post-graduation.

"It has been very stressful having to look for other non-DCYF jobs to support me through the time when I'm not employed by DCYF, because I'm a fully financially independent student, and I will not be employed over the summer unless I find something soon. I think I would warn students of that possibility with CWTAP."

- **Interest in pursuing a CWTAP MSW degree:** Half of the BASW graduates plan to apply for a CWTAP MSW degree within the next one to two years.
- **Social work competencies:** On average, students rated themselves at 4.4 out of 5.0 across 25 child welfare social work competencies, which included many competencies drawn from the Children's Bureau Annual Progress and Services Report (APSR) indicators. The two highest-rated competencies related to recognizing the effects of trauma on children and families and recognizing that active efforts must be provided when there is a reason to know that a child may be an Indian child.

Methods and Survey Response

P4C distributed survey invitations to all graduating students via email, followed by at least three reminders between May and early June. CWTAP directors were also encouraged to remind participants to complete the survey. All participants across the three universities completed the survey, resulting in a 100% response rate. Table 1 summarizes the number of graduates per program and response rates.

Table 1. Graduating Students and survey response rates by program

<i>Program</i>	Graduates	Response rate
UW Tacoma	7	100%
UW Seattle	3	100%
Eastern Washington U	2	100%
Total	12	100%

Participants were asked to share feedback on several key aspects of the CWTAP program. These included their decision to enroll, the level of perceived program support, the program’s helpfulness in preparing them for a career with DCYF, and what they considered to be the most valuable aspects of the program, along with suggestions for improvement. Participants also provided feedback about their likelihood to recommend the program to prospective students. Lastly, CWTAP students were asked about their commitment to the child welfare field, their intentions to pursue a Master of Social Work (MSW) degree, and the program’s role in developing their social work competencies.

Findings

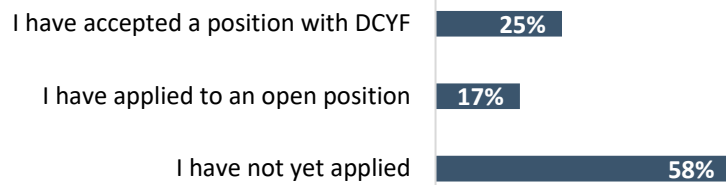
Student demographics

Participants in this sample indicated their age range, gender, and race/ethnicity. 75% of students were between the ages of 20-29, 17% between the ages of 30-39, and 8% between 40 and 49. Regarding gender identity, 92% indicated female and 8% indicated male. Regarding race/ethnicity, participants could indicate multiple categories and 67% identified as White, 25% as Hispanic or Latino, and 17% as Black or African American.

Child Welfare employment application status

At the time of survey completion, students were between one to five weeks prior to graduation, so it is reasonable that many students had not yet engaged in the application process. One fourth of students had accepted a position at DCYF, 17% had applied to an open position at DCYF, and over half (58%) had not yet applied for a child welfare position (see Figure 1). Two students from EWU had accepted positions and indicated that their start date would be July 1, 2026, and one student from UWT was already employed at DCYF.

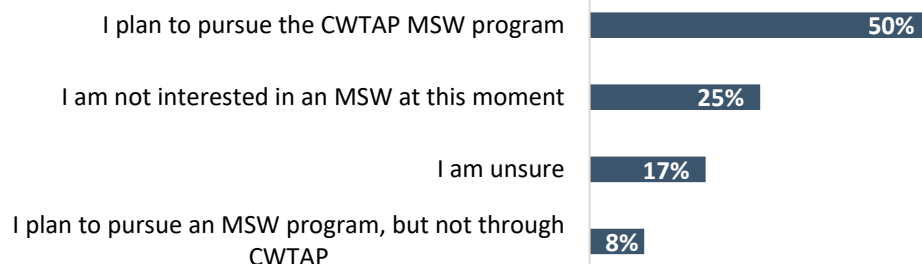
Figure 1. Child Welfare Employment Application Status



Educational plans

About half of the respondents plan to enroll in the CWTAP MSW program. Among the six students (50%) who plan to pursue a CWTAP MSW, two plan to apply next year and four plan to apply in two years. Among the remaining students, three reported that they are not currently interested in an MSW degree, two were unsure of their plans, and one person plans to pursue an MSW but not through CWTAP (see Figure 2).

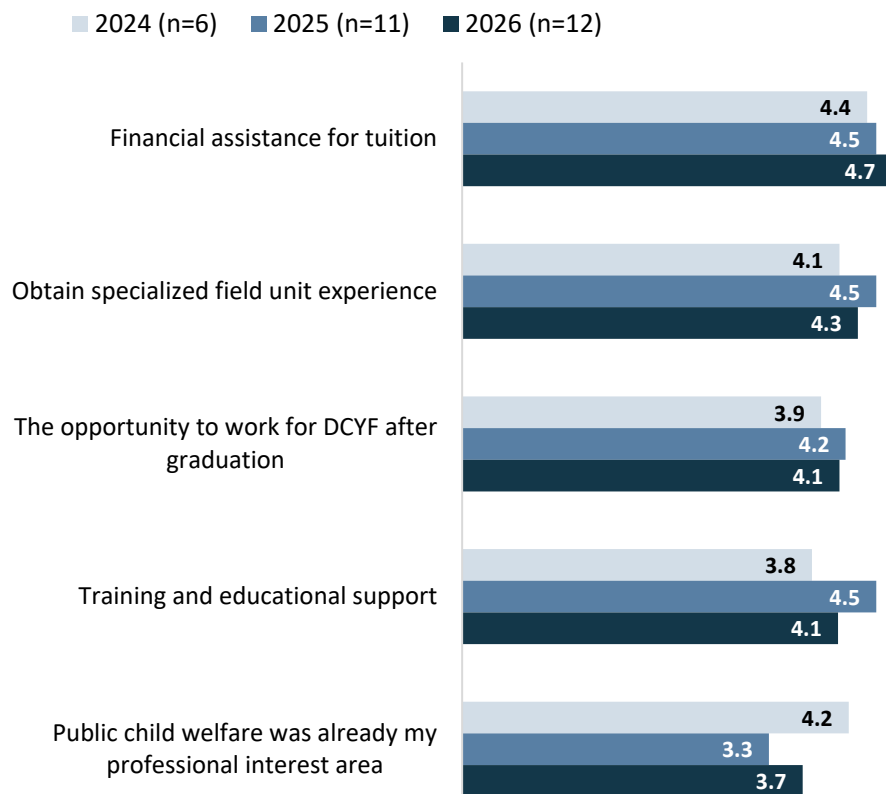
Figure 2. Educational Plans



CWTAP participant enrollment decision

Graduating students were asked to rate factors that influenced their decision to enroll in CWTAP. Participants rated five contributing factors using a 5-point Likert scale, where 5 was very important, 4 was important, 3 was somewhat important, 2 was slightly important and 1 was not important. “Financial assistance for tuition” (4.7) was the most important factor in this cohort’s decision to enroll in CWTAP. “Public child welfare was already a professional interest area” (3.7) was ranked lowest among the five factors in their decision to enroll in CWTAP. Figure 3 shows the factors in descending order of importance for the 2026 respondents and compared to the ratings from previous BASW cohorts. Financial assistance has consistently been an important factor for enrollment. The lower rating for public child welfare already being a professional interest area may be related to the limited experience and discernment among undergraduate students as compared to graduate students about social work roles and career paths.

Figure 3. Factors contributing to individual participants' decision to enroll in CWTAP



Program support

Participants rated their perceived level of support across eleven areas of CWTAP using a 5-point Likert scale, where 5 indicated “strongly agree” and 1 indicated “strongly disagree.” The average perceived level of support was 4.4, with the highest level of agreement at 4.6 for the following statements:

- I felt that my practicum placement provided a supportive learning environment.
- I felt that participating in a mock interview was helpful in preparing for employment.

Slightly lower levels of agreement, at 4.1 and 4.2, were given for the following statements:

- I had sufficient training opportunities to support my learning.
- I feel that my social work coursework prepared me well for child welfare practice.
- I felt that workshops and seminars were effective in preparing me for child welfare practice.

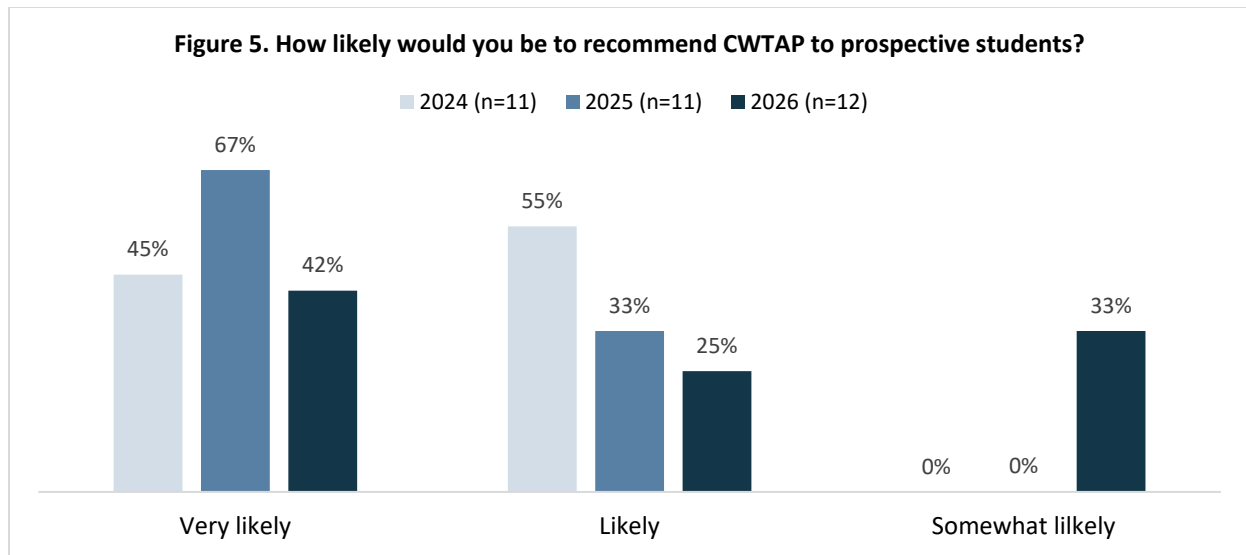
Figure 4 shows program support ratings in descending order for 2026. Comparison to 2024 and 2025 is not shown because the structure of the program support questions was changed this year.

Figure 4. Support during the program



Participants' likelihood to recommend CWTAP to prospective students

When asked if they would recommend the program to other students, 42% of participants said they were *very likely* to recommend it, while 25% said they were *likely* to recommend it, and 33% said they were *somewhat likely* to recommend it (see Figure 5). This represents a lower level of endorsement as compared to previous years. Students provided a rationale for their ratings in a follow-up question; four students indicated that they would limit their recommendation only to those who have the capacity for child welfare work, and two students expressed concerns about the current hiring freeze at DCYF.



Please share why you would or would not recommend the program to prospective students. (n=8)

Reasons to recommend: Regarding reasons students would recommend CWTAP, five students noted the real-world learning and preparation in the child welfare field, and five students mentioned the financial assistance provided through CWTAP.

Real world experience gained through practicum (5)

- *I would recommend the BASW CWTAP program to prospective students because it provides valuable real-world experience that helps bridge the gap between classroom learning and professional social work practice. The program offers opportunities to gain hands-on experience within DCYF, build professional relationships, and develop skills that are directly applicable to future careers in child welfare and social services.*
- *It gives students a well-rounded practicum experience in a supportive learning environment.*
- *I think my learning experience in practicum and seminars had a large positive impact on my experience and I was able to learn a lot, and I would say I've gained experiences that others in my cohort were not able to experience.*
- *I think the degree in which CWTAP provides opportunity to see how different systems work with each other provides great preparation for the social work field.*

Financial Assistance (5)

- *I think CWTAP offers a good opportunity to help pay for tuition and get hands-on experience in the social work (specifically child welfare) field.*
- *The financial support provided through the program is also a significant benefit, allowing students to focus more on their education and field experience.*
- *I would recommend if CPS is what you want to do and you need financial assistance for tuition.*

Reasons to recommend with caution: Regarding reasons students would be somewhat likely to recommend CWTAP, four students would only recommend the program for individuals with a strong interest in child welfare and who have the capacity to manage the intensity and dynamics of the work. Two students cited that the current hiring freeze gives them pause as it has created immediate financial stress and concern due to limited options about positions and locations of future employment at DCYF. These students wish there was more advanced communication to prepare them for this possibility.

Interest and capacity for child welfare work (4)

- *I think this line of work can be very intense, and I would warn them of the kinds of cases they would see.*
- *This is very heavy work and that is what would deter me from encouraging people to do it if they don't have the mental capacity.*
- *I would not recommend if you want to go directly into your masters or if child welfare is not a passion of yours.*

Impact of hiring freeze (2)

- *I think something else I'm struggling with right now is the idea of not having a DCYF job lined up right after graduation because of the current hiring freeze. I think it can be a little stressful that CWTAP offers employment after graduation, but it isn't fully guaranteed in the sense that we do not have an assured spot at a specific location, and we need to apply to several offices. It has been very stressful having to look for other non-DCYF jobs to support me through the time when I'm not employed by DCYF, because I'm a fully financially independent student, and I will not be employed over the summer unless I find something soon. I think I would warn students of that possibility with CWTAP.*
- *Right now there are no jobs available because of the freeze. It's thought to open up when everyone is applying. I worry that we are not going to be able to have say in where we work or what we are doing. I am appreciative for the financial assistance, but I don't want to resent my decision because I feel like it is being held over my head and I lose freedom of choice. We students give up a lot for this program and deserve to have some say on our future as it pertains to our goals. I don't want to feel like I am being scammed. So, I would say, a little more transparency and student choice will go a long way, and more people might want to come work for the department.*

What are the best aspects of the BASW CWTAP program? (n=9)

Students most often reported that the best aspects of CWTAP were professional development opportunities and the support they received from peers, instructors, and mentors. Two students mentioned the tuition assistance and secured position in DCYF as the best aspects.

Professional development opportunities (7)

- *Definitely that we get the opportunity to develop our social work skills and work directly with clients. I feel like I've gained a lot of experience through the CWTAP program. Another great aspect is the tuition stipend.*
- *Direct experience in child welfare prior to graduation.*
- *Interacting with social workers and learning from them. Shadowing experiences.*
- *learning child welfare and having a small cohort to lean on and learn from.*
- *The field placement opportunities, mentorship from experienced professionals, and exposure to the child welfare system. Being able to shadow and learn from social workers in the field helped me better understand the responsibilities, challenges, and rewards of social work practice. The program also helped me strengthen my professional skills, including engagement, documentation, communication, and understanding policies that impact clients and families.*

Supportive peer, instructor, and mentor relationships (5)

- *Learning child welfare and having a small cohort to lean on and learn from.*
- *Supervision over my case load with my FI.*
- *... mentorship from experienced professionals, and exposure to the child welfare system. Being able to shadow and learn from social workers in the field helped me better understand the responsibilities, challenges, and rewards of social work practice. The networking opportunities and support from both agency staff and university faculty contributed greatly to my professional growth.*
- *The best part is the people. The FI's were all so amazing and supportive, they really wanted us to do good and feel like we could go to them for anything. My fellow mentors and classmates were amazing, and I have met lifelong friends. The work is hard at practicum, but the experiences I've had and what I have learned will set me up to be a great social worker, and person for life. It set a great foundation.*
- *The tight knit cohort, field instructors, seminar days, and the field experience.*

Financial assistance, job security (2)

- *We get the opportunity to develop our social work skills and work directly with clients. I feel like I've gained a lot of experience through the CWTAP program. Another great aspect is the tuition stipend.*
- *Financial assistance, good experience, good trainings, and a secured job right after graduation.*

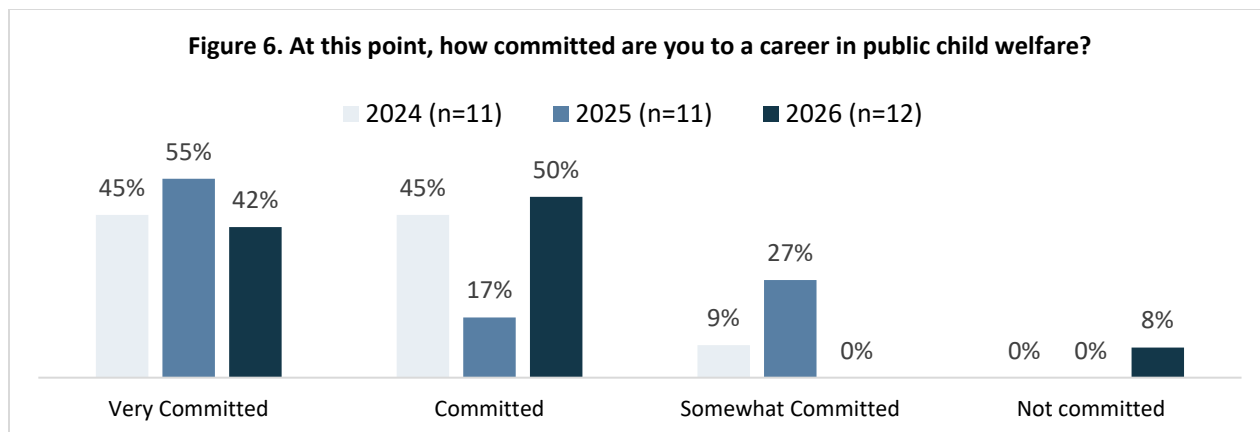
What suggestions do you have to improve the BASW CWTAP program? (n=6)

The six students who responded offered a variety of suggestions to improve CWTAP related to flexibility, communication about requirements and resources, increased support, topics for practicum seminars, networking with peers, and guaranteed employment.

- *Transparency and more freedom of choice in what we are getting into, because at the end of the day, people will dedicate time and hard work to spaces where they feel valued and not used.*
- *I'm not sure how possible this would be, but it would be great if CWTAP students had positions assured to them at specific offices soon after graduation. I also think I would have appreciated training on drug paraphernalia because I don't know too much about that.*
- *Allow more flexibility in signing up for classes outside of the core social welfare courses.*
- *One suggestion for improvement would be to provide more structured opportunities for students to connect with CWTAP participants across different regions and agencies to share experiences and best practices. Additional workshops focused on transitioning from student to professional social worker, career development, and navigating employment within DCYF would also be beneficial. Finally, increasing communication about program requirements, timelines, and available resources throughout the academic year could help students feel more informed and supported as they progress through the program.*
- *More field instructor support when they are not in office.*
- *Provide mental health support for your interns. This is the reason so many people can't handle this work- the vicarious trauma we gain from being here is heavy. It's important work, and I greatly value it, but the only thing that has made me want to quit is the emotional baggage and pain it sometimes causes. It should be part of the program to teach interns how to cope and handle it.*

Commitment to Child Welfare

Students were asked to rate their commitment to a career in the child welfare field using a 4-point scale where 4 was “very committed”, 3 was “committed”, 2 was “somewhat committed”, and 1 was “not committed”. While 42% indicated they were *very committed* and 50% indicated they were *committed*, one student (8%) indicated they were *not committed* (see Figure 6). When looking at the three years of BASW graduates, the majority of students have indicated that they are *very committed* or *committed* to a career in child welfare. It should be noted that with these small samples, variations of 8% or 9% represent responses of one student. Differences across cohorts should be interpreted with caution.



CWTAP's role in building social work competencies

Lastly, participants were asked to rate the extent to which the program supported their development of social work competencies. The competencies included in this year's survey align with the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) competencies, the APSR indicators, and the foundational practicum learning activities identified by CWTAP and DCYF. Fourteen competency items were carried forward from the previous survey, and eleven items related to the APSR were added to the 2026 survey. Students used a 5-point Likert scale, where 5 indicated "strongly agree" and 1 indicated "strongly disagree." As in previous years, the average rating across all competencies remained at 4.4, and all competency ratings this year fell between 4.1 and 4.6 (see Table 2).

The competencies with the highest ratings (4.6) were:

- the ability to recognize effects of trauma on children and families.
- the ability to recognize that active efforts must be provided when there is reason to know that a child may be an Indian child.

The lowest rated competency (4.1) was:

- the ability to apply key state and/or federal laws and regulations governing the Department of Children, Youth, and Families' work.

These ratings indicate that BASW students are fairly well supported by CWTAP across a wide range of child welfare social work competencies.

	2026 avg. rating n=12	2025 avg. rating (n=11)	2024 avg. rating (n=11)
Table 2. BASW Competencies: To what extent do you feel that your CWTAP experience supported...			
Your ability to recognize effects of trauma on children and families.	4.6	4.3	4.3
The development of your identity as a social worker by reflecting on roles and professional expectations of DCYF staff.	4.5	4.5	4.5
Your ability to identify personal biases and life experiences that may impact ability to remain objective, and/or provide equitable and ethical services to the client.	4.5	4.6	4.2
Your ability to identify how child development impacts case practice (e.g., family time, initial face to face, health and safety visits).	4.5	4.5	4.4
Your ability to distinguish among case and agency practices such as: case consultations, initial face to face, health and safety visits and court hearings.	4.5	4.6	4.3
Your ability to gather collateral information to support assessment and case planning.	4.5	4.7	4.6
Your ability to draft case notes using behavioral and descriptive language.	4.4	4.7	4.5
Your ability to support family time visit from the beginning to end (schedule, transport ,supervise and document).	4.4	4.1	3.8
Your ability to assess indicators of substance use, mental health and/or domestic violence that may impact the caregiver's ability to safely parent.	4.3	4.1	4.5
Your ability to honor the legal rights of children and families in dependency law.	4.3	4.2	4.3
Your ability to engage from a strength-based perspective with parents, children and communities.	4.3	4.5	4.3
Your ability to differentiate tools such as the Child Safety Framework and the Structured Decision Making (SDM-RA) and how they inform decisions about services, safety plans and child placements.	4.3	4.3	4.5
Your ability to obtain medical and/or education records to support the health and well-being of children.	4.2	4.4	4.5
Your ability to apply key state and/or federal laws and regulations governing the Department of Children, Youth, and Families' work.	4.1	4.3	4.4
Your ability to recognize that active efforts must be provided when there is reason to know that a child may be an Indian child.	4.6		
Your commitment to uphold tribal sovereignty and the Indian Child Welfare Act.	4.5		
Your ability to prioritize stability for children and youth in care.	4.5		
Your ability to assess needs and support access to services for children, families, and caregivers to achieve case goals.	4.4		
Your ability to assess for present danger.	4.4		
Your commitment to safely maintaining children in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.	4.4		

Your ability to distinguish gathering questions, threshold questions, safety threats, and safety plans as components of the Child Safety Framework.

4.3

Your strategies for partnering with caregivers for child safety, permanency, and well-being.

4.3

Your ability to prioritize timely monthly visits with children and parents.

4.3

Your ability to support continuity of family relationships and connections for children.

4.3

Your strategies to support timely permanency for children and youth.

4.3

Total Average rating

4.4

4.4

4.4