

CWEB internships offer opportunities for students, regional offices

The Department of Human Services (DHS) is committed to hiring and developing highly skilled caseworkers for the Office of Children, Youth and Families (CYF). One method to reach that goal is the Child Welfare for Baccalaureates (CWEB) program, profiled in the [February 2015](#) edition of DHS News. Following you will find reflections on the CWEB program from Lindsey Hern, CWEB intern; Liz Reiter, casework supervisor; and Betsy Caroff, regional office director. All three work at the Mon Valley Regional Office (MVRO).

Lindsey wasn't sure what she wanted to do for her internship.

As a social work major, she knew she wanted to help others, but wasn't sure where she could find the best fit. The search was made especially challenging because she initially wasn't interested in casework.

After hearing about the CWEB program, Lindsey decided to take the risk and sign on – not only for the internship benefits such as free tuition and a fellowship payment, but also the in-depth experience.

"I knew I had an interest in foster care, and I wanted to get involved with working in that system. I felt that spending time at a CYF office would be a good starting point and expose me to different opportunities in child welfare," said Lindsey.

After completing training last summer, Lindsey began working with her supervisor, Liz, to learn the ins-and-outs of the Mon Valley Regional Office. She shadowed several staff members before taking on cases of her own.

"Right now, Lindsey is working a mix of investigations and cases, and we have plans to train her to become a conferencing and teaming facilitator. She is doing everything a full-time caseworker does, just with a smaller caseload and with the support of our team," said Liz.

"We see CWEB students as a 'unit's intern' as opposed to one person's intern. All of our staff members have strengths, and we want our interns to work with as many staff members as possible to learn those skill sets," added Betsy.

Through her hands-on experience, Lindsey has not only learned the policies and procedures of casework, but has also enhanced soft skills, such as effective communication and problem-solving, that will help her to excel in the field. After graduation, she will complete her commitment to the CWEB program by spending a year as a full-time caseworker II in MVRO.

The CWEB experience was not only beneficial to Lindsey and her career track: both Betsy and Liz agree that the CWEB program offers countless advantages to the regional office.

"Our CWEB interns are always enthusiastic and excited about their work, and that passion breathes life into supervisors. Having to teach interns best practices means that staff members are staying fresh and up on policies. CWEB interns really strengthen our department as a whole," said Betsy.

"Since CWEB interns train in the regional office, they are familiar with not just the nuts and bolts of casework but also the office culture and the area they serve. When they come on as a staff member, it's like getting a fully cooked caseworker out the door. The first year is an investment from both sides as

the CWEB intern learns and grows, but in the end, everyone – the student, the regional office, and, ultimately, our families – benefits tremendously,” Liz concluded.