



National Association of Social Workers

WEST VIRGINIA CHAPTER

## SB 312 / HB 4128 Re: Child Protective Service Workers

### Degree Preference in CPS

**West Virginia:** Any 4-year degree, no experience necessary

**KY, MD, OH, PA, VA:** Bachelor's degree in Social Work/related field\*

In 2015 the WV Legislature allowed DHHR to hire any bachelor's degree for CPS and similar jobs under a special license. Since then the number of children in foster care has skyrocketed. The opioid crisis played a major role in this increase, but so must have the worker effectiveness. Without additional data from DHHR we cannot assess the impact of worker performance on child removals. \*\*

### \*\*WV Data Reported to National Child Abuse & Neglect Data Systems

Child Maltreatment Report, The Children's Bureau, US DHHR (2018)  
[www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/research-data-technology/statistics-research/child-maltreatment](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/research-data-technology/statistics-research/child-maltreatment)

<b># of Children Who Received an Investigation:</b>	<b>First-Time Victims:</b>
2015: 45,407	2015: 4,118 Rate per 1,000: 10.9
2018: 52,276	2018: 5,563 Rate per 1,000: 15.3

<b># of Child Victims: Rate per 1,000:</b>	<b>Victims by Age (most significant):</b>
2015: 12.8	< 1 Year:
2018: 19.1	2015: 702
	2018: 1,360

**WV Social Work Programs:**  
**Over 300 Graduates**  
**BSW/MSW EVERY YEAR!**

Bethany College  
Concord University  
Marshall University  
Shepherd University  
West Liberty University  
West Virginia State University  
West Virginia University

### As introduced, SB 312 / HB 4128 would:

- Clarify that workers without related degrees can still work at DHHR/BCF as registered caseworkers
- Assure misconduct complaints are adjudicated independently of DHHR (WV Board of Social Work)
- Promote a professional code of conduct that puts clients first & stresses self-sufficiency
- Create a career ladder—which would be improved by giving a higher salary for a Social Work degree

### Why Hire Someone with a Social Work Degree?

- They have chosen to work in human services, are aware of the challenges & are more likely to stay
- Social Work is an Applied Science with practiced skills/techniques critical to success in child welfare
- They understand communities and systems & are much more capable of crafting permanency plans

***"...Social workers are more likely than non-social workers to still be employed in public child welfare positions after three years."***

***"Social workers also were significantly more likely than were non-social workers to report that they knew about community resources..."***

*Professionalization in public child welfare: Historical context and workplace outcomes for social workers and non-social workers, Scannapieco, Hegar, Connell-Carrick, Children and Youth Services Review, 34 (2012) 2170-*

### \*\*DHHR should be providing county-level comparison data for 2015-present including:

- # of CPS workers with degrees in social work, related degrees, and unrelated degrees
- # of CPS supervisors with degrees in social work, related degrees, and unrelated degrees
- Child removals and disposition (case outcome) by county

© 1/22/2020 **West Virginia Chapter, National Association of Social Workers**

1608 Virginia Street East, Charleston, WV 25311

304.345.6279 (NASW) Fax: 304.720.3766 Email: [Admin.naswww@socialworkers.org](mailto:Admin.naswww@socialworkers.org)

## SB 312 / HB 4128: Discussion \*\*\*

Licensing and registration in West Virginia are the things that focus DHHR toward professionalism.

DHHR takes pains to point out that some states do not require CPS workers to have a state professional license. They do not reveal that surrounding states have more stringent minimum hiring standards.

West Virginia's hiring requirement is any four-year degree, no experience necessary. Surrounding states typically prefer a degree in social work, or at minimum a closely related degree –often with one or two years of experience.

As introduced, the bills clear up a compromise reached in 2015, when DHHR attempted to exempt all staff from licensing. The compromise allows DHHR to hire with any 4-year degree. This is called the 'DHHR restricted provisional' category because employment is restricted to DHHR's Bureau for Children & Families (BCF).

Creating a registration category for employees with an unrelated degree is an appropriate way to clarify current practice, while continuing to protect the public from unscrupulous practitioners. DHHR/BCF employees will enter the pathway for which they qualify: regular license for a degree in social work; provisional license for a related degree; registration for an unrelated degree.

Under SB 312 / HB 4128, DHHR/BCF can continue to hire caseworkers with unrelated degrees. These employees can request tuition support under the Title IV-E child welfare training program to take coursework leading to a social work degree.

Significantly, DHHR is considering recruitment and retention strategies that, after employment, may offer a salary or bonus incentive for earning a social work degree and/or achieving regular/provisional license status. DHHR should create salary and bonus incentives to recruit and hire those with a social work degree.

Licensed social workers and registered caseworkers will continue to be required to adhere to a professional code of ethics, obtain appropriate supervision (as required by rule) and earn professional continuing education.

Should misconduct occur, licensure and registration give the public the right to complain to an independent entity (WV Board of Social Work). Adjudicated complaints are matters of public record. Without licensing and registration, complaints will likely be treated as confidential personnel matters.

\*\*\*Based upon introduced versions of SB 312 / HB 4128

### **Additional Concern: 2-Year Degrees – Filling Seats is Not Enough**

There is apparently consideration of a 2-year degree program to prepare DHHR caseworkers or support staff. DHHR should hire support staff to help ease burdensome tasks, but also provide real incentives to professionalize the CPS and related caseworker workforce.

Other states' paraprofessional practices in child welfare are important to consider:

**Pennsylvania:** *"Any equivalent combination of experience and training which includes 12 college credits in sociology, social welfare, psychology, gerontology, criminal justice, or other related social sciences AND one year of experience as a County Social Services Aide 3 or in a similar position performing paraprofessional case management functions."* (Retrieved 1/12,/20: <https://www.governmentjobs.com/careers/pabureau?keywords=child%20welfare%20specialist>)

**Texas** requires 60 hours of college credit AND 2 years of professional experience working with children. State regulations require a 4-year degree to place children, but this requirement was waived for state CPS caseworkers, making rules more stringent for child placing agencies than for CPS staff.

### **\* Surrounding States Hiring Preferences:**

**Kentucky:** Graduate of a college or university with a bachelor's degree in social work, sociology, psychology, marriage and family therapy or a related field.

**Maryland:** A master's degree with the specific major title of "Social Work" (MSW) is the only acceptable education qualification for this classification. This is the provisional level of professional social work used for social workers that have not yet become licensed in Maryland.

**Ohio:** For social worker positions, licensure is preferred but not required. However, a related Bachelor's Degree is required for social worker positions

**Virginia:** Minimum of a Bachelor's degree in a Human Services field or minimum of a Bachelor's degree in any field with a minimum of two years of appropriate and related experience in a Human Services area...

**Pennsylvania:** A bachelor's degree which includes or is supplemented by successful completion of 12 college credits in sociology, social welfare, psychology, gerontology, criminal justice, or other related social sciences; OR Two years of experience as a County Social Services Aide 3 and two years of college level course work which includes 12 college credits in sociology, social welfare, psychology, gerontology, criminal justice, or other related social sciences; OR Any equivalent combination of experience and training which includes 12 college credits in sociology, social welfare, psychology, gerontology, criminal justice, or other related social sciences and one year of experience as a County Social Services Aide 3 or in a similar position performing paraprofessional case management functions

**Source:** State website online job announcements January 12, 2020