

Dear MSW Student:

California is experiencing a critical shortage of professionals in public child welfare holding a master's degree in social work (MSW). To ameliorate this shortage, the University of Southern California (USC) Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work is participating in a workforce development initiative for graduate social work students who are interested in public child welfare. The goal of this program is to produce social workers who will secure employment and embark on a career working with children and families involved with the child protection system.

In support of this effort, a **stipend of \$52,000 for two academic years** is being offered to students whom upon completion of their MSW degree, commit to work at the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) for a minimum of two calendar years. The DCFS stipend program is a federally funded partnership between Los Angeles County DCFS and several local MSW programs, including USC's, under the Title IV-E provision of the Social Security Act. The two-year stipend is only available to **on-campus students** who are **committed** to pursuing a career in public child welfare in Los Angeles County. The funds are disbursed over four semesters \$13,000 Fall of 2026 – (end of November); \$13,000 Spring 2027; Fall of 2027 (end of November); and \$13,000 Spring of 2028.

Public child welfare work demands the highest level of professional skills and knowledge to preserve, support and strengthen families, and to protect children. The move to professionalize public child welfare programs is one we - at the USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work - enthusiastically participate in and wholeheartedly support.

Please review the information sheet on page two (2) of this document which explains the stipend requirements. Please be aware that if you are awarded a stipend, you will be required to be placed in **the Department of Children, Youth and Families** during your second-year practicum. In addition, the stipend requires a genuine interest in public child welfare, and a commitment to work for the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services upon graduation. **You must also have a valid California driver's license, access to a vehicle, valid automobile insurance with your name on it, pass a criminal clearance background check, have no felony convictions, including DUI convictions, pass a psychological evaluation and pass an interview with DCFS staff to qualify.** Lastly, if you are awarded the stipend, you will need to attend a two-day orientation and a one-day contract signing orientation - all typically scheduled for the second week of August. You must sign the agreement before the stipend award is released.

Qualifications and Requirements

To qualify and remain eligible for the LA DCFS Public Child Welfare Stipend, recipients must do the following:

1. Enrolled in the **campus-based program only** with the expected graduation date of May 2028. **VAC students are not eligible.**
2. Be able to complete your second internship with the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services in a Los Angeles County DCFS Office, either at Metro North or Vermont Corridor.
3. Maintain good academic standing with a 3.0 or better GPA and satisfactory performance in practicum placement.
4. Have a valid California driver's license.
5. Have access to a car with valid automobile insurance with your name on it as a driver.
6. Pass a public child welfare elective course.
7. Attend an orientation in August before classes begin.
8. Participate in specialized training sessions throughout the academic year. Attendance is mandatory, and these training sessions are held in person on the USC campus. Date and time of training sessions are subject to change.
9. Must be able to work legally in the United States.

DCFS Stipend Program Opportunities

During the stipend program, all students will be placed at a DCFS regional office for their second internship placement either at Vermont Corridor or Metro North Office (near campus).

Payback Commitment

Students who participate in the LA DCFS stipend program agree to work at the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services for two calendar years after graduation. Graduates will be placed in the DCFS offices with the highest need for staff. The goal is for DCFS graduates to further their public child welfare career beyond the two years of employment payback and adopt a leadership role to become effective agents of change.

Additional Information about Interning with LA County DCFS

LA County DCFS is the largest public child welfare agency in the United States. Established in 1984, DCFS is designed to provide a wide range of protective and social services to residents of Los Angeles County. The Department's primary focus is ensuring the safety of children and families, while focusing on the maintenance of family systems, the reunification of families who have children placed in resource care, and securing permanent homes for children who need this service through permanency planning. The Department operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A CHILDREN'S SOCIAL WORKER (INTERN)

As a DCFS Intern, you will be responsible for:

- Meeting the ongoing safety needs of clients who are under DCFS supervision.
- Providing psychosocial assessments and services to families of diverse cultures.
- Educating, advising, advocating, and supporting involuntary clients who may present as ambivalent, angry, fearful, and/or traumatized and who may be living in difficult environments and social situations.

- Being a referral/resource for clients, and networking with the legal, medical, educational, and psychological service systems that impact the client's situation.
- Knowing, understanding, and adhering to the legal and ethical boundaries that define social work case management at DCFS.
- Documenting all client contacts and services provided as well as creating case plans and writing court reports within expected time frames.

On any given day, you may find yourself:

- Dealing with an unexpected casework or administrative issue.
- Prioritizing your client's needs with the demands from court and the expectations of managers.
- Providing crisis intervention services to clients regarding child abuse referrals, child removal/replacement, child death or injury, and financial or housing problems.
- Assessing and servicing client situations involving serious physical or sexual abuse.

Possible Benefits:

- Ability to create positive changes in the lives of children and families.
- Ability to interface with diverse populations, situations, and organizations.
- Ability to develop skills and work towards a professional social work degree.
- Ability to promote and/or be reassigned to various job functions.

The priority application deadline is April 1st, 2026, and the final application deadline is May 29th, 2026.

Applicants are encouraged to apply by the priority deadline. Applicants must complete the packet in full.

You can email your completed application to: Richie Wong at richiewo@usc.edu. Students selected will be contacted for an interview. Applicants who do not qualify for the interview round will be notified via email.

If you have any questions or concerns, please email Professor Holly Priebe-Sotelo at hsotelo@usc.edu or Professor Rafael Angulo at angulo@usc.edu.

The priority application deadline is April 1st, 2026, and the final application deadline is May 29th, 2026.

Please continue to the next page where the LA DCFS Stipend Application is located.

PLEASE TYPE APPLICATION AND INCLUDE YOUR RESUME PERSONAL INFORMATION

First Name: _____ Middle Name: _____

Last Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Daytime Telephone: (_____) _____ Cell Phone: (_____) _____

Email: _____ Birthdate: _____

Expected MSW Graduation Month, Year: _____

Check this box to confirm you read and understand the information on the LA DCFS Stipend Information Sheet.

Ethnicity/Race: _____ Gender: _____

Languages spoken other than English: _____

Degree of fluency: (circle one for each) 1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5

1- Can understand some, cannot engage in a conversation

3- Can understand and speak moderately

5- Can understand and speak fluently

Name of university/college where you received your bachelor's degree:

Degree/Major: _____ Date Degree Conferred: _____

If you are a current employee in a county/public child welfare agency, please provide us with a statement of support from your agency executive /district supervisor in order to qualify for preference in stipend assignment.

Citizenship and Residence History (all information will be kept strictly confidential)

Country of Birth: _____

Country of Citizenship: _____

If a Naturalized U.S. Citizen, Date of Naturalization: ___/___/___

If not a U.S. Citizen, Expiration Date of Green Card: ___/___/___ or DACA: ___/___/___

Criminal Background: If you have been convicted of a misdemeanor or felony in the last three years and you were over the age of 18 when convicted, please attach a separate sheet with date(s), charges, location(s) and penalties. You do not need to include offenses that occurred prior to your 18th birthday, traffic violations with fines of \$500.00 or less (unless the traffic violation resulted in a felony or misdemeanor conviction), or expunged offenses.

Not Applicable Description Attached

Do you have an automobile for placement related travel? Yes No

Driver's License and Insurance

Driver's License Number: _____ State Issued: _____ Exp. Date: _____

Automobile Insurance Company: _____

Policy Number: _____ Expiration Date: _____

ESSAY QUESTIONS

Name of Applicant: _____

Date: _____

Please type your responses to the following questions on separate sheets of paper. Don't forget to add your name to your responses. Your responses are neither right nor wrong but will serve as a means of assessing the fit between you and public child welfare work. Your answers to each question should be no less than half a page and no more than two (2) pages in length- single or double-spaced.

1. Describe your understanding of what work in a public child welfare setting entails. In what ways have your prior experiences prepared you for working in a public child welfare agency? What interests you about public child welfare work and makes you think you would like to focus your education and career in this area?
2. Maria and Carlos are ages 4 and 6. They lived with their parents until their maternal grandmother called the child abuse hotline telling them that she suspected her son-in-law of inappropriate sexual contact with her grandchildren when her daughter (the mother) was at work during the evening hours. When interviewed, the children kept changing their story. The father vehemently denies any abuse ever happened. Because the grandmother has never approved of their marriage, the children's mother believes the father. The children were temporarily placed in the grandmother's home rather than in foster care. Discuss the issues and dynamics that would be relevant in working with each of the family members. How does this case impact you and your belief system?
3. In what ways do people become involved in the public child welfare system? If this happened to you or a member of your family, how would you respond? What are the similarities and differences between you and the clients with whom you will interact?
4. The environment of a public child welfare agency will require you to demonstrate flexibility, self-advocacy, and effective communication skills. How do you see yourself utilizing these skills at the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services?