

CWTAP Quarterly

*Child Welfare Training and Advancement Program
Eastern Washington University*

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Director's Letter

Dear CWTAP Community,

As we wrap-up winter quarter and move into spring we embark on one of our busiest quarters. In spring we both recruit for CWTAP and prepare students for graduation and DCYF employment. We also do the bulk of our contract and budget work during this time.

Many of our graduating students are already DCYF child welfare employees or have been hired during their MSW program, the remainder will be seeking work soon. We are very excited to be planning our first in-person commencement since 2019 for our upcoming graduates.

We are currently recruiting for our second Everett cohort which starts this summer, early indications suggest this will be a robust cohort. Further, this will be the first time in over a decade we have run two programs in Everett simultaneously (starting a new program every two years). We started this approach with our Spokane part-time program last year. Both part-time programs offer a hybrid approach to education for adult learners. The Everett program offers evening classes, and Spokane offers weekends; both are designed to be accessible to students from outside the local area. These part-time hybrid programs are in addition to our Cheney full-time, in-person day program (first year, second year, and advanced standing).

Thank you for your continued partnership and support of Eastern's CWTAP.

Sincerely,
Diana LeBlanc

Teaching During a Pandemic

With safety protocols in place, Eastern Washington University's MSW programs continue with in-person class instruction and field practicum. Eastern's CWTAP program continues to work closely with DCYF to provide a safe practicum experience for students, staff and clients. The Governor's mask mandate is slated to end after March 11. In response, Eastern has made the decision to make masks optional from March 12 onwards. This change includes classrooms, academic and business buildings, and residence halls on the Cheney campus and the Catalyst building in Spokane. Masks will still be required on public transportation and in clinical and other specialized settings.

We are hopeful about the future and will continue to put the safety of our students, and DCYF partners and clients at the forefront as we continue to navigate the changing landscape of COVID-19.

Alumni Spotlight

Mariah Cunningham, MSW – Child Protective Services – Spokane by Gerry Charvat



Mariah Cunningham is a CWTAP alumni who graduated from Eastern Washington University's Cheney full-time MSW program in 2020. Mariah obtained a bachelor's degree in children's studies with a minor in sociology from EWU in 2018. Mariah knew from a very young age that she wanted to help foster children obtain forever families and had settled on getting her MSW in her freshman year of high school. She initially wanted to be an adoption counselor and had planned on pursuing it as a career. A chance encounter on an airplane between Mariah's basketball coach and Diana LeBlanc, the director of EWU CWTAP, completely changed Mariah's career path! Mariah had never heard of CWTAP or considered public child welfare as a career. Everything changed when her coach sat next to the EWU CWTAP director on a flight

from Seattle to Spokane. Her coach learned all about CWTAP on that trip and thought Mariah would be a great fit. Upon hearing more about the program, Mariah was intrigued by the idea that she could have an impact on foster youth in such a direct and meaningful way. After some research, she decided to pursue CWTAP. She completed her practicum in a Child & Family Welfare Services (CFWS) unit in the Spokane Central DCYF office and got hired as an after-hours worker, which she said was also a valuable experience. The COVID-19 pandemic hit during Mariah's last quarter of her MSW program and upended her entire practicum. Even through this, she remained connected and committed to her practicum. This unprecedented event required her to execute incredible discipline and organization, but it really prepared Mariah for the "new normal" of social work practice.

Just prior to graduation, Mariah accepted a position in a CFWS unit in Spokane. She remained in CFWS for just over a year, until realizing she was interested in doing more preventative work. She applied for and was accepted in to a Child Protection Services (CPS) position doing Family Assessment Response (FAR) and Investigations. Mariah is grateful for her practicum and employment in CFWS, as it gave her better insight into the long-term impact of removing children from their family. Mariah is committed to her work at DCYF and believes that there are many opportunities for workers to try new things and expand their knowledge and experience. She believes passionately that if a worker is feeling burned-out, there are opportunities to recharge and reset within DCYF - so don't quit!

Mariah reported that CWTAP provides amazing opportunities to practice engagement with children and families. CWTAP also provides a unique opportunity to become comfortable asking for help, making professional connections, and learning community resources. Mariah has noticed that CWTAP students appear much more comfortable asking for help after getting hired because of their practicum experience. Mariah advises any students considering CWTAP to make sure they are open to working with parents and families, as they will not be working directly with children on a regular basis. For those accepted into CWTAP, take risks and speak up. Ask permission to take the lead during child interviews and parent interactions. Utilize the opportunity for professional growth in a safe and supportive setting.

Mariah played four years of college basketball and one year of track. Much of what she learned in basketball applies to her work now; teamwork, discipline, patience and leadership. Mariah is happily married and expecting her first child in August. She plans to have a long career at DCYF and would love to be an agency field instructor for CWTAP students in the future.

Student Spotlight

Lyndsay Craig – Everett Part - Time

by Kara Rozeboom

Lyndsay Craig is an EWU CWTAP student in her second year of the Everett part-time MSW program. Lyndsay obtained her bachelor's degree in criminal justice with a minor in psychology in 2015 from Washington State University. Lyndsay started working at DCYF in 2018 as an Social Service Specialist 2 (SSS2) in a Child & Family Welfare Services (CFWS) unit in Everett, WA. In working for the Department she found that she wanted to work in child welfare as her career. In 2020 she transferred to a family drug treatment court CFWS SSS3 position. In November 2021 she was promoted to Family Drug Treatment Court CFWS Supervisor in the Everett DCYF office. "My favorite parts of my job are working with parents and watching them grow and working with children and families together in general by supporting them." She decided to pursue an MSW to help advance her career path and better her skills with children and families.



Lyndsay applied for CWTAP because it is a great opportunity to benefit individuals and the agency (DCYF) as a whole for those people who want a career in child welfare. She said CWTAP has changed her perspective about what child welfare really is. Lyndsay also said that CWTAP improved her engagement skills with children and parents for the better by learning different skills and theories in her MSW classes. Lyndsay feels COVID has impacted the work she does with clients at DCYF as it has caused delays in court hearings, which affects permanency timelines for children. However she is thankful COVID hasn't affected her ability to obtain practicum hours in person.

Lyndsay's advice for those interested in applying for CWTAP is to make sure to have a balance in your life between work, school, and your personal life. She said the CWTAP program is a good opportunity if you are looking to have a career in the field of child welfare. When Lyndsay is not in practicum, class or completing homework, she enjoys spending time with her family and friends. A self-care activity she also enjoys is spending time with her energetic and happy pit bull dog.

Contact Information

	Everett	Cheney/Spokane
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	<p>Please submit suggestions to: dpatterson@ewu.edu</p> <p>Contributors to this issue: Gerry Charvat, Kara Rozeboom, Diana Patterson LeBlanc, and Nancy Fagan.</p>	

Helpful Links

Eastern Washington University - School of Social Work: www.ewu.edu/cpp/social-work

[Children's Bureau COVID-19 Resource Page](#)

Includes information for frontline workers, children involved in child welfare, foster care providers, and other general workforce resources

[National Indian Child Welfare Association COVID-19 Resource Page](#)

Includes information for frontline workers, children, caregivers, and other general workforce resources

Alliance for Child Welfare Excellence: www.allianceforchildwelfare.org

Child Welfare League of America: www.cwla.org

Children's Defense Fund: www.childrensdefense.org

Child Welfare Information Gateway: www.childwelfare.gov

Casey Family Programs: www.casey.org

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families: www.acf.hhs.gov