

Child Welfare Stipend Program Application
Virginia State University 2027–2028 Academic Year
PRIORITY APPLICATION – BSW PROGRAM

The Child Welfare Stipend Program (CWSP) is a partnership between the Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) and five public universities in Virginia. The program provides financial support, child welfare coursework, workshops, and practicum opportunities at local departments of social services (LDSS) in return for a legally binding commitment to work in foster care, adoption and/or in-home (family preservation) services in a LDSS in Virginia following graduation.

Virginia State University (VSU) solicits full-time current, prospective BSW and MSW students to apply to the CWSP. There are only eight slots for the CWSP so this is considered a competitive award.

The PRIORITY application deadline for **BSW applications is October 31, 2026 by 5:00 pm**. ANY APPLICATIONS SUBMITTED AFTER THAT TIME WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.

The following documents need to be sent with your completed application:

1. Current resume
2. Professional reflection
3. Release of Information Form (if applicable)

Screening and Selection Process

The CWSP team at VSU will review and screen application packets. Applicants will be selected and scheduled for an interview (virtually or in person). During the interview, applicants are asked a series of questions and given further detail of the post-graduation commitment. Applicants are selected for the program based on a thorough review of application materials, the interview, and reference checks.

Student Notification and Acceptance of Stipends

Applicants will be notified in writing via email about the award decision in a timely manner after the selection process is completed. Applicants who are offered a slot in the CWSP and choose to accept the financial award will be required to sign a legally binding contractual agreement obligating them to seek and obtain employment in a local department of social services in Virginia postgraduation in family preservation, foster care and/or adoption services. Applicants who choose to accept the stipend must also submit other documents required by the state.

Important Notes:

Financial awards are communicated to the VSU Financial Aid Office and disbursed to student aid accounts. Acceptance of this stipend may affect other financial aid that you receive. Applicants must contact the VSU Financial Aid Office to determine the impact of the award upon eligibility for other financial aid awards.

If you are selected for an award, you will be required to complete a Request for a Search of the Child Protective Services Central Registry, a Criminal History Record Request and an Information Request for the Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles upon prior to entering your field placement and upon obtaining employment in a state or LDSS. A history of founded CPS complaints, criminal convictions or a poor driving record may be a barrier to field placement and employment in Virginia's state or local departments of social services and thus may make you ineligible to receive the award if you are not accepted for a placement by a local department of social services.

If you have concerns about your eligibility, please email Jackie Cowan, Child Welfare Coordinator at jcowan@vsu.edu for more information. Failure to disclose this information or to report any change of status relative to conviction of a crime, any moving traffic violations or a founded complaint of child abuse/neglect may result in dismissal from the Child Welfare Stipend Program and require your repayment of the financial award.

Preparing Your Application Packet

The following steps must be completed and your documents submitted by the application deadline to be considered. Your emailed submission of the required documents will be acknowledged within two business days of submission.

Step 1: Review and Reflect

Please review and reflect on the following:

Read: [How the Child Welfare System Works](#)

Watch: [A Realistic Job Preview of Child Welfare Work in Charlottesville](#)
[Informational video about the CWSP](#) from Virginia DSS

Reflect: Take some time to reflect on the strengths and goals that you have that would make you a good fit for this area of social work practice.

Step 2: Submit a Current Resume

Your current resume should include education, employment, volunteer and any field practicum/internship experience. Also include any special skills or certifications you would like to tell us about (i.e. language skills, QHMP, etc.). **Your resume must be submitted with your application.**

Step 3: Write a Professional Reflection

After you have reflected on the material above, please submit your responses to the following questions. **Responses should be a maximum length of two pages.** Responses will be evaluated on quality of substance and writing skills; be thorough, yet concise with your responses.

1. Why are you interested in working with families in the public child welfare system, specifically in family preservation, foster care and/or adoption services?
2. What experience have you had in public or private child welfare, as a volunteer, student or employee? How has that experience influenced you? If you do not have experience in child welfare, tell us more about what you understand to be the focus and importance of child welfare work.
3. Describe your immediate career goals. How will a social work education with a focus in public child welfare help you obtain these goals?
4. Working in public child welfare often means you are working in situations that will challenge you personally and professionally. Tell us about a time when you encountered a challenge where there was no way out but through. How did you work through that experience?
5. The Commonwealth of Virginia is investing significant resources to prepare its future child welfare workforce. Tell us what strengths you will add to the child welfare workforce if chosen to participate in this program.

Note: Please respond in whatever way feels best to you. While we are not picky when it comes to text size, font or spacing, we are looking for content that reflects appropriateness of fit for the program. **Your professional reflection must be submitted with your application.**

Step 4: Complete the CWSP Application

To complete your application, fill out and submit **THIS FORM**. All application materials must be submitted by the application deadline in order for your application packet to be reviewed and considered.

Step 5: Submit the CWSP application, resume, professional reflection, and Release of Information form (if applicable) to CWSP@vsu.edu. Your email submission will be acknowledged within two business days of submission.

Child Welfare Stipend Program Application

Section 1: Personal Information

Full Name (Last name, First Name):

Preferred Pronouns:

☐ She/Her

☐ He/Him

☐ They/Them

☐ Other:

☐ Prefer not to say

Social Security Number:

Current Address:

City:

State:

ZIP Code:

Current Phone Number:

Permanent Address (if different):

City:

State:

ZIP Code:

Phone Number:

Personal Email Address:

VSU Email Address (if known):

Do you have a valid driver's license?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If yes, what state was it issued in?

If not, what is the anticipated date you plan to get your driver's license?

Please note: You may apply for the CWSP but you may not be interviewed/considered for the CWSP unless you have successfully obtained a driver's license by the interview date.

Section 2: Social Work Program Information

Have you been accepted or are currently enrolled in the School of Social Work at Virginia State University?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Student ID Number (if known):

What is your current program status?

☐ BSW Junior

☐ BSW Senior

☐ Advanced Standing MSW Student

☐ Generalist year (first year) MSW Student

☐ Specialization year (second year) MSW Student

Expected Graduation Date:

Cumulative GPA:

Current agency-based practicum or field placement (if applicable):

Have you previously received the CWSP award?

If yes, please indicate year and university:

Section 3: Employment and Internship Experience

To participate in the Child Welfare Stipend Program, students must be eligible for employment in Virginia at a local Department of Social Services (LDSS) agency.

What is your current employment authorization status?

- ☐ I am a U.S. citizen
- ☐ I am a non-citizen national
- ☐ I am a lawful permanent resident (Green Card holder)
- ☐ I am authorized to work in the U.S. under a valid visa or employment authorization document (EAD)
- ☐ I am not currently authorized to work in the U.S.

Do you have child welfare work experience with VDSS, a LDSS, or a private child welfare agency?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

If yes, provide agency name, job title, program area, and dates of employment:

Have you previously completed field placement or volunteered at VDSS, a LDSS, or a private child welfare agency?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

If yes, provide agency name, your role, and dates of internship/volunteering:

If you have previously been or are currently employed by VDSS, an LDSS agency, or a private child welfare agency, do you give permission for the VSU Stipend Coordinator to contact that agency?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

If yes, please complete the following form and attach with your application.

[Release of Information Form](#)

If you do not give permission, please explain why you do not give consent.

Section 4: Background Disclosure

Have you ever been charged and/or convicted of child abuse, neglect, or molestation, or had the charge taken under advisement or dropped due to an agreement with the prosecutor's office?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If yes, please explain (attach additional pages if needed):

Section 5: Demographic Information

This information is for state grant reporting only and will not affect your application.

What is your age range?

☐ 18–23

☐ 24–30

☐ 30+

☐ Prefer not to say

What best describes your race and ethnicity? (Select all that apply)

☐ American Indian or Alaskan Native

☐ Asian

☐ Black or African American

☐ Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander

☐ Hispanic or Latino/Latina/Latinx

☐ White

☐ Multiracial

☐ Another option not listed (please list):

☐ Prefer not to say

With which gender do you most identify?

☐ Female

☐ Male

☐ Non-Binary / Third Gender

☐ Another option not listed:

☐ Prefer not to say

Educational background – highest degree attained by CWSP entry:

- ☐ High school diploma or GED
- ☐ AA – Human services-related
- ☐ AA – Other
- ☐ BSW
- ☐ Bachelor's – Human services-related (not BSW)
- ☐ Bachelor's – Other (please indicate):
- ☐ Master's – Human services-related (not MSW)
- ☐ Master's – Other (please indicate):
- ☐ JD / PhD
- ☐ Other (please indicate):

How did you hear about the CWSP at VSU?

Section 6: Professional References

Please provide the names of two professional references. Both references must be from someone who has worked with you, preferably one from someone who has supervised you in some capacity (as an employer, intern, volunteer, etc.).

Reference #1

Reference's Name:

Title and Organization:

Relationship to Applicant:

Address:

Phone Number:

Email Address:

Reference #2

Reference's Name:

Title and Organization:

Relationship to Applicant:

Address:

Phone Number:

Email Address: