

## Children's Corps Overview

Fostering Change for Children helps children and families by creating positive solutions to challenges within the child welfare system. Children's Corps was created in 2011 to help support the frontline workforce in child welfare. The goals are to: **a)** increase retention rates of frontline child welfare workers, **b)** improve outcomes for children and families, and **c)** create future leaders.

Corps members are placed at one of 16 partner child welfare agencies throughout New York City and Westchester in caseworker and other frontline positions in foster care and preventive programs. Corps members commit to serving for two years and agencies provide a full salary, benefits.

Children's Corps uses a 3-pronged model as a holistic approach to achieve its goals.

1. **Strategic Recruitment & Selection**
2. **Comprehensive Pre-service Training**
3. **On-going Support & Professional Development**

There are **177** Corps members who have entered our program since 2011 and there are currently **99 active Corps members** in the field including some alumni.



### Recruitment & Selection

Child welfare is a complex field, putting high demands on its frontline workers. Children's Corps finds the "right fit" for these workers by identifying necessary **competencies (character traits)** for successful caseworkers. Children's Corps uses behavioral competency-based applications and interview techniques to identify candidates who are the right fit.

Children's Corps seeks individuals with both Bachelor's or Master's degrees and who want to make a difference in the lives of vulnerable children and families. Over the last 5 years, recruitment efforts have expanded to schools and job sites across the country, while also heavily target the NY Tri-State Region and social work schools. The Corps size has stabilized to 40-50 Corps members each year.

#### *Recruitment & Class Size Growth:*

	Class of 2011	Class of 2012	Class of 2013	Class of 2014	Class of 2015
<b>Schools Recruited At:</b>	30	80	151	164	194
<b>Applications Received:</b>	200	356	388	376	346
<b>Interviews Held:</b>	48	72	128	132	134
<b>Class size</b>	25	26	37	49	42

### Pre-Service Training Academy

Many new caseworkers enter child welfare with little-to-no training, and agencies differ in preparing these new workers for the field. Children's Corps members go through a 4-week Summer Training Academy before they enter child welfare practice. This pre-service training provides foundational skill



building in a wide range of areas (such as family engagement, family court, safety-risk, trauma, domestic violence, mental health, etc.). Corps members also shadow at their respective agencies so that they can observe and learn from real practice. The training offers a collegial space for personal and professional growth as well as the opportunity for supportive relationships within the Corps.

## Support & Professional Development

One chief reason for caseworker turnover is lack of support. Children’s Corps supports its members throughout their two-year commitment in a myriad of ways including: **a) monthly meetings** (for discussion, processing, and further training); **b) an online resource group** (where Corps members, alumni and staff share professional resources and/or help with case related challenges); **c) monthly newsletters**, **d) individual and mentor support**, **e) career guidance**, and **f) monthly check-in surveys** that collect information about their experience on the frontline. The information we collect from our Corps members is used to enhance our training and support services, track frontline patterns over time, and provide our partner agencies with feedback from the frontline. Check out the [Children’s Corps Blog](http://childrenscorps.wordpress.com) (childrenscorps.wordpress.com) for honest and thoughtful perspectives of life on the frontline of child welfare in NYC.



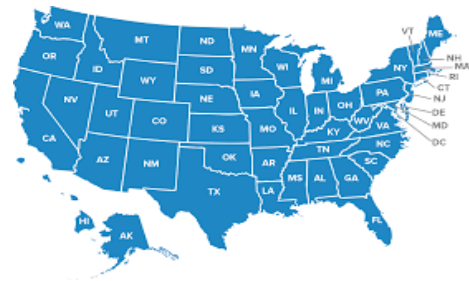
Children’s Corps also aims to support its partner agencies by sharing feedback from frontline workers and workforce patterns and offering trainings tailored for the challenges they face. In addition, a quarterly newsletter is sent out with innovative workforce ideas and practices.



## Expansion

Child welfare workforce retention is a need for many U.S. states. Potential replication sites are determined in two ways: 1) identify U.S. states with a high foster care population and high workforce turnover, and make contact with local stakeholders; 2) participate in national webinars and conferences to share successes and learned practices. These platforms have increased the interest in the Children’s Corps program model, evidenced by several states requesting more information and technical assistance concerning workforce retention. Thus far, Nevada and Missouri have received consultation/training for their recruitment and selection, and Louisiana and Colorado have requested technical assistance.

Ohio is the next projected state to implement the Children’s Corps model. Cuyahoga, Stark, and Summit counties have all expressed interest in bringing Children’s Corps to their child welfare system. Children’s Corps has identified several of the necessary local partners to implement the model, and has proposed a two-year implementation budget of \$638,853.66.



Children’s Corps remains flexible in its expansion efforts, realizing each locality is unique and faces unique challenges. With guidance from national child welfare experts, the Children’s Corps model will be adapted to improve any system with high workforce turnover.

Finally, Children’s Corps has partnered for two years with The New York State BSW Scholars Program to combine efforts in the downstate region. The goal of this joint program is to: 1) attract BSW students in their junior year of college to the field of child welfare, 2) enhance their preparation for child welfare work, and 3) provide them with a seamless pathway to employment in New York’s private child welfare agencies.