Dear Entering Full-Time Student:

California is experiencing a drastic shortage of professionals in public child welfare holding master’s degrees in social work. In an attempt to ameliorate this shortage, the University of Southern California (USC) School of Social Work is participating in a workforce development initiative for 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.

The California Social Work Education Center (CalSWEC), housed at UC Berkeley, is a consortium of graduate schools of social work - including USC - who have partnered with the state of California, its counties and other stakeholders to establish and implement the aforementioned workforce development initiative. In support of this effort, a generous stipend of $18,500 per academic year (totaling $37,000) is being offered to students whom upon completion of the MSW degree, agree to work in public child welfare for a minimum of one year for each year of financial support received. This “payback employment” must be in the state of California, usually at a county agency for two years. Graduates of this program can also complete their employment requirement at a Native American agency that serves this population anywhere in the country.

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

Please review the information sheet on page 2 of this document which explains the stipend requirements. Please be aware that if you are awarded a stipend, you will be required to enroll in the Department of Children, Youth and Families. It requires a genuine interest and intention to work for a public child welfare agency upon graduation. You must also pass a criminal clearance background check and have no felony convictions, including DUI convictions, 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 tentatively scheduled during the first week of August 2016. You must sign the contract before the stipend award is released.

The application deadline is Wednesday, June 2, 2016 at 5 pm. Please note that any applications received after the deadline will not be considered even if the application was received by the student after the deadline. You can mail your application to:

CalSWEC Public Child Welfare Project Coordinator
850 W. Washington Blvd., 1st Floor, Los Angeles, CA 90015

Or email an electronic version of it to Ms. Tamela Johnson at tamelajo@usc.edu.

Students selected will be contacted for interviews that are typically conducted in-person. Please be available mid-June through July. Applicants who do not qualify for the interview round will be notified via email. Before applying, we highly encourage you to watch a short video by clicking on this link: http://www.mss.ca.gov/SocialServicesPositions/SocialWorkerVideo

Virtual Academic Center: Eligibility for VAC students will be assessed on a case-by-case basis due to strict contract requirements and attendance at specialized CalSWEC academic courses and CalSWEC field practicum expectations, all in the Los Angeles area.

Students receiving the CalSWEC stipend must reside in the state of California.

If you have any questions or concerns, please email Professor Rosemary Alamo, CalSWEC Public Child Welfare Co-Project Coordinator, at ralamo@usc.edu.
Full-Time CalSWEC Title IV-E Stipend Information Sheet

1. NATURE OF STIPEND

The Title IV-E CalSWEC stipend provides support of $18,500 per year for two years to students enrolled full-time in the MSW program at USC. Part-time students are not eligible. This stipend is designed to prepare students for careers in public child welfare. Students must agree to enroll in the Department of Children, Youth, and Families. They must also complete an elective course in the fall semester of the second year titled SOWK 619 Social Work in Public Child Welfare Settings. Field placements must be in non-profit (1st year) and in county child welfare service agencies (2nd year) that serve clients eligible for Title IV-E services.

Please note that if you receive this award, it may impact your financial aid package. A representative from the School of Social Work Financial Aid Office will meet with all awardees during the orientation to discuss any questions that you may have related to the stipend.

2. WORK REQUIREMENTS

Students must sign a contract agreeing to pay back this award by securing employment in a county or state public child welfare services agency - or with an agency that provides child welfare services to Native Americans - within a few months after graduation. Student must work one year for each year of aid awarded (e.g., two year award = two years' work). Students who are DSS/CDSS or CSW employees on educational leave must return to work in their home county upon graduation unless there is no appropriate child welfare social worker job available. Students who do not have a prior job must apply to qualifying child welfare service agencies within the state of California - or with an agency that serves Native Americans anywhere in the country.

3. WORK INTERRUPTION

A graduate who terminates employment before the pay back requirement is completed must repay the prorated stipend. Hardship extensions may be applied for and granted by CalSWEC, but they only postpone the work requirement for one year. Waivers of repayment may be made in case of permanent disability or death. If a graduate is laid off because of county budget cuts and/or cannot secure a job in a county child welfare department within the state after demonstrating reasonable efforts through formal documentation, payback may be waived.

4. PAY BACK REQUIREMENTS

Students are responsible for payback of stipends and any costs of collection under the following circumstances:

a) Failure to maintain good academic standing in the MSW program (below a 3.0 GPA or poor field performance);
b) Failure to complete the MSW within the standard two-year period (unless a hardship extension is granted);
c) Failure to accept appropriate employment;
d) Failure to qualify for employment, as a result of failing an interview, medical or psychological exam, or criminal clearance;
e) Conviction for a felony or crime involving harm to children;
f) Voluntary termination of employment before completion of the work requirement (unless a hardship extension is granted);
g) Termination of employment before completion of the work requirement due to poor or improper conduct; or
h) Violation of the NASW Code of Ethics.

5. SELECTION OF STUDENTS

All students who meet normal admissions standards and who have a genuine interest in child welfare are eligible to apply. Applicants who have language skills matching community needs are encouraged to apply.

Students selected must pass a criminal background check, which requires that you have no felony or DUI convictions on your record. If you think your record has been “expunged”, we encourage you to verify this before applying.
6. CURRENT EMPLOYEES

Current employees of child welfare service agencies must be on educational leave; they may not be receiving pay from the agency during the academic year. They may work during break periods and during the summer for the agency. Again, please remember that USC does not offer a part-time program.

Please select the location you will be attending:  
- University Park Campus  
- Orange County Academic Center  
- Virtual Academic Center

ONLY FULL-TIME STUDENTS ARE ELIGIBLE TO APPLY
PREFERABLY, PLEASE TYPE APPLICATION AND INCLUDE YOUR RESUME

7. PERSONAL INFORMATION

First Name: ____________________________ Middle Name: __________________ Last Name: ____________________________

Address: _____________________________________________________________________________________________

City: _______________________________ State: ___________ Zip Code: ________________________________

Daytime Telephone: (______) ____________________________ Cell Phone/Pager: (______) ____________________________

Email: __________________________________________ Birthdate: ____________________________

Graduation Year: __________________________________________

Ethnicity/Race: ____________________________ Gender: ____________________________

Languages spoken other than English: __________________________________________

Degree of fluency: (circle one for each)  
1 - can understand some, cannot engage in a conversation  
3 - can understand and speak a little  
5 - can understand and speak fluently

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

Date of Degree Conferred: ____________________________  □ BA □ BS □ BSW  □ Major: ____________________________

Are you currently a public child welfare employee?  □ Yes  □ No  Are you applying for/on educational leave?  □ Yes  □ No

If currently a public child welfare employee, name of agency: __________________________________________

Address: ____________________________ City: ____________________________ Zip Code: __________________

Job Title: ____________________________ Supervisor’s Name: ____________________________

Dates of Employment: From: ____________ To: ____________

If you are a current employee in a county CWS agency, please provide us with a statement of support from your agency executive/district supervisor in order to qualify for preference in stipend assignment. Please remember that USC does not offer a part-time option for this stipend program.

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: ______ / _____ / ______

8. ESSAY QUESTIONS

Name of Applicant: ___________________________________________ Date: __________________________

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

1. Describe your understanding of what work in a public child welfare setting entails. In what way has your prior experience prepared you for working in a public child welfare internship? What interests you about public child welfare that makes you think you would like to focus your education and career in this area?

2. Maria and Raquel 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 handle it? What are the similarities and differences between you and the clients with whom you will interact?

4. Given that your pay back commitment for this stipend is to any child welfare agency within the state of California, please explain how you are prepared to move to another county to fulfill this commitment, if there is not a job available within a 75-mile radius of your current residence when you graduate.