NC Division of Child Development
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Contact Person: Deb Cassidy, Division Director, deb.cassidy@dhhs.nc.gov
MSW Supervision: Anna Carter, MSW, and possibly others TBD

The Division of Child Development (DCD) is the state agency overseeing the child care system that serves over 250,000 children in more than 8,600 licensed child care facilities in NC. It is acclaimed as one of the top programs in the nation: see website for accolades, initiatives, etc.

This agency is open to hosting up to 3 or 4 MSW macro interns for the 2011-12 academic year in a variety of projects with their many sections. The office has a very pleasant setting and the group is congenial and professional—an excellent site for students interested in research, policy, legislative advocacy, and the range of administrative tasks that maintain an exemplary and highly successful state agency.

Below are some of the possible emphases for students. Interested students should arrange a meeting with Deb Cassidy, who will gather key staff to explain their projects. Together the student and agency leaders will determine suitable matches. Project possibilities discussed include:

Regulatory Services: Tammy Barnes, Section Chief, and Andrea Lewis, Assistant Section Chief

This is the largest section in the division, with 199 field staff across the state and 34 support staff in the Raleigh office. They ensure that DCD regulations are enforced; 107 Child Care Consultants serve 8,600 child care facilities. They license facilities according to a nationally acclaimed “5 Star System”, where 2-5 stars are voluntary. The system also consists of tiered reimbursement, so that facilities with higher stars receive higher subsidy reimbursement payments. Andrea oversees the customer service, intake, and child abuse/neglect units. The customer service unit receives calls and helps providers and the public understand the regulations. The intake unit receives complaints regarding noncompliance with child care requirements and abuse and neglect in child care facilities. There are over 800 complaints/year about abuse/neglect in child care facilities. Child abuse/neglect reports are now jointly handled with county DSS offices of Child Protection Services (which do the local verifications of the allegations) and by the Regulatory Services section of DCD (which works to correct the problem).

**Internship project:** They are working with the State DSS to change that regulatory system such that it would be only under the auspices of the DCD, not county DSS offices. In the case of this hoped-for change, a student could help with the system redesign, through policy writing, research into how other states deal with investigations of complaints, and writing summaries of findings, etc.

The student could lead focus groups with the child care consultants in the field (there are 21 field teams across the state), and help write an interpretive guide in simple language, so child care consultants better understand the regulations and are citing them consistently across the state. There would be occasional day trips to meet with these people in focus groups around the state. The student could assist with the data analysis of a regulatory efficiency study and the development of a strategic plan for the regulatory section. The student could assist with a customer service survey of the 8,600 providers; 2/3 of them are on email, some would require phone interviews. The student would help analyze the results and write conclusions and recommendations for how the Division could provide better customer service to their clients.
Licensing Enforcement: Kimberly Mallady, Section Chief

This is the smallest division section; they call it the “Day Care Police," “small but mighty!” Once violations (abuse or neglect) are substantiated, they issue penalties to enforce compliance by the providers regarding licensing standards. They work with law enforcement and field staff on warrants for illegal child care arrangements and assist with fraud cases where providers cheat the subsidy system, termination of training privileges for those approved to train child care providers and disqualification of providers based on their criminal record. When providers do not pay their annual license fees (from $52-$600), this section collects, in tandem with the DHHS Controller’s Office. Work in this area includes dealing with appeals in “contested case process” with the Office of Administrative Hearings and the two Assistant Generals assigned to represent the Division in legal matters.

Internship project: Kimberly would like to learn what works well and what does not in their enforcement practices. A student could assist with an internal review so the section can keep improving its actions, toward the goal of consistency, accuracy and effectiveness. This is a research project. It would involve research into their records, finding patterns, gathering data and summarizing findings. The student may also conduct phone interviews with providers to listen to their thoughts about licensing enforcement, to gather feedback and then interpret it.

Subsidy Services: Ron Byrd, Section Chief

The State of NC offers subsidies to low-income families so they can afford quality child care. The NC General Assembly has a budget formula allocating how much each county has available to serve. The Subsidy section oversees how these subsidies are used by county DSS offices. There are 9 Field Staff covering 9 regions of the state.

Internship project: A student could help this section with “process engagement,” that is, with a review of how counties implement the subsidies and interact with the DCD. This would involve some data analysis from their records, but also interviewing people in the counties. The student would get feedback from child care providers on how the subsidies are working; this is an interviewing and listening project. The Division is unrolling a new electronic card, called SEEK, Subsidized Early Education for Kids, that parents can swipe at the child care centers to pay for their services. This is a new way of working with subsidies, and there will be a lot to learn how this new system works. The student would also do research on what other states do for their subsidy system, and write reports on that research.

In sum, students here would have opportunities to learn how a highly effective state system keeps improving itself, so that families and children receive ever-better child care in our state. They would:

- Come to know the child care system in NC and contribute to its continued capacity-building.
- Learn research and survey processes.
- Write important findings that will be used to drive policies and program changes and potentially be included in reports that may go to the NC General Assembly.
- Have the opportunity of sitting in on a range of child care-related interagency collaborations.
- Interact with child care providers, field agents, and a range of people working “on the ground.”

Qualities a student needs to enjoy and thrive in this placement:

- Someone who knows something about or at least cares about quality child care.
- Extroverted, collegial person to be part of a congenial, dedicated team.
- Analytical and detail-oriented, but with a big-picture orientation and a systems perspective.
- Excellent relational and writing skills for interviewing and report writing.