How Child Welfare Professionals Access, Use, and Share Information and Technology

Results from the National Child Welfare Information Study

August 20, 2019

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Why This Topic Is Important

- Need for access to useful and trusted information, resources, and services
- Methods to seek out and consume information evolve
- Agencies, clearinghouses and technical assistance providers must tailor and adjust approaches accordingly

Purpose: Inform the design and reach of resources and services for agency administrators, supervisors and caseworkers, judges and attorneys, and students so that they are more accessible, consumable, useful, and effective at helping child welfare systems to improve practice

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Four Primary Audiences of Interest

Child welfare professionals working in State, county, and private agencies

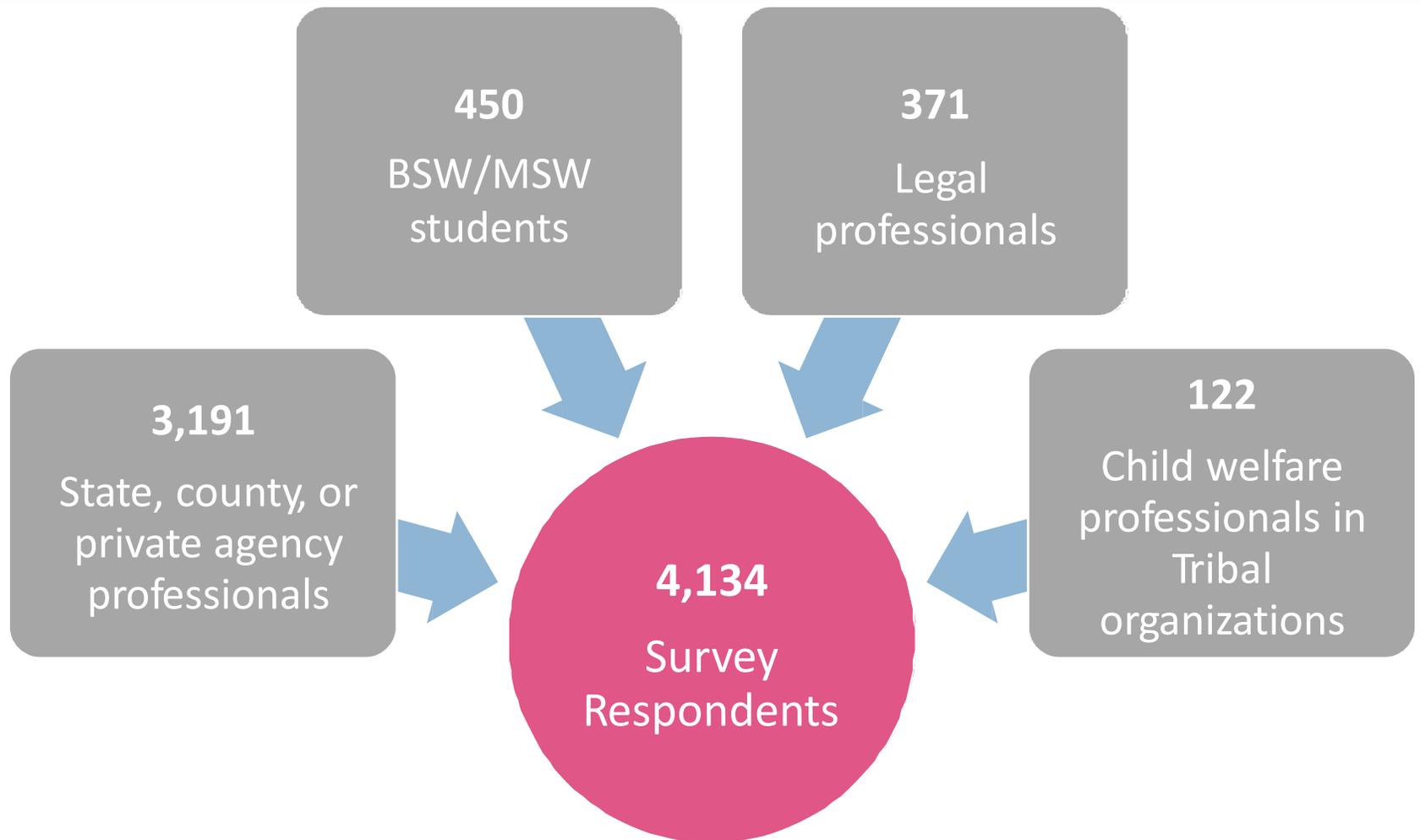Child welfare professionals working with Tribal organizations

Legal professionals that work in child welfare

BSW and MSW students planning to enter the child welfare workforce

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Recruitment of BSW and MSW Students

- Identified contacts for Title IV-E stipend programs and other social work programs
- Held webinar with university faculty to recruit 'Study Partners'
- Study partners distributed survey through own contact methods:
    - Email
    - Text
    - Learning management systems
    - Social media

Phase 4: Final Sample

450
BSW/MSW students

371
Legal professionals

3,191
State, county, or private agency professionals

122
Child welfare professionals in Tribal organizations

4,134
Survey Respondents

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Overview of Key Findings

Topics Covered by the Survey Instrument

Information Habits and Preferences

Sharing Information

Access to Information

Training Format and Content

Searching for Information

**Use of Mobile Devices and Social Media**

Receiving Information

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Access to Information

90% of child welfare professionals have reliable access to the Internet at least most of the time

Legend:
- Always or almost always
- Most of the time
- Sometimes
- Rarely or never

Values: 52%, 38%, 9%, 1%
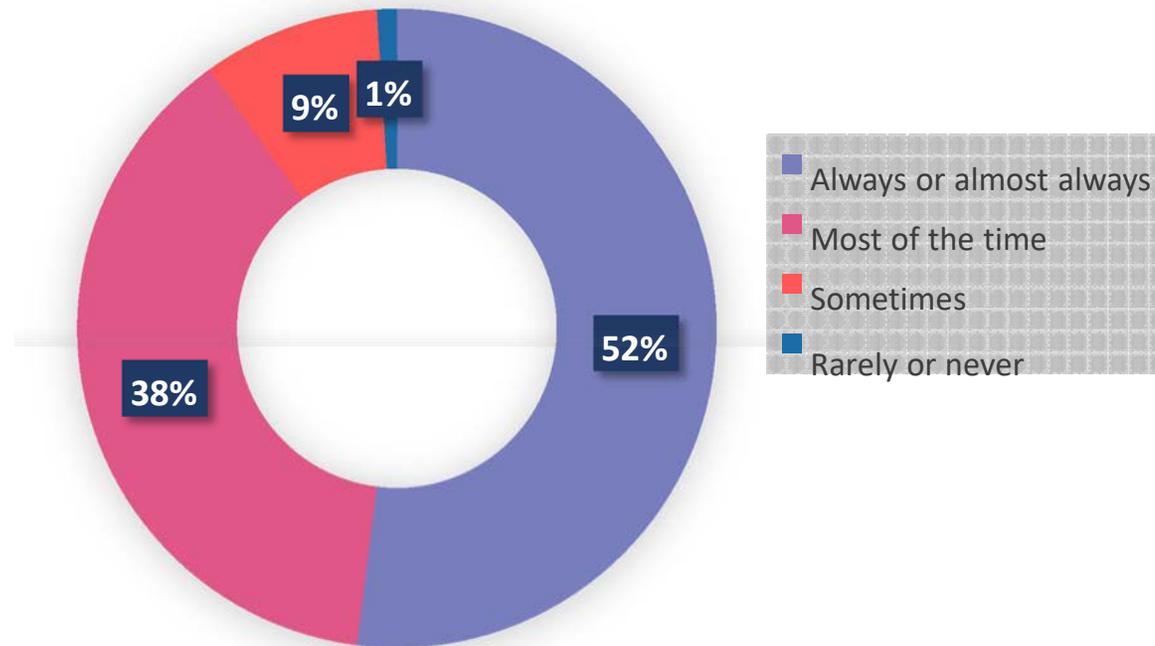
Access to Information

67%

have enough access to child welfare information to do their work effectively

Need more:

- Information about **community or local services**

- Information about **child welfare laws and policies**

- Access to **learning opportunities**

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Searching for Information

Frontline workers are more likely than directors and administrators to search for information by asking a colleague
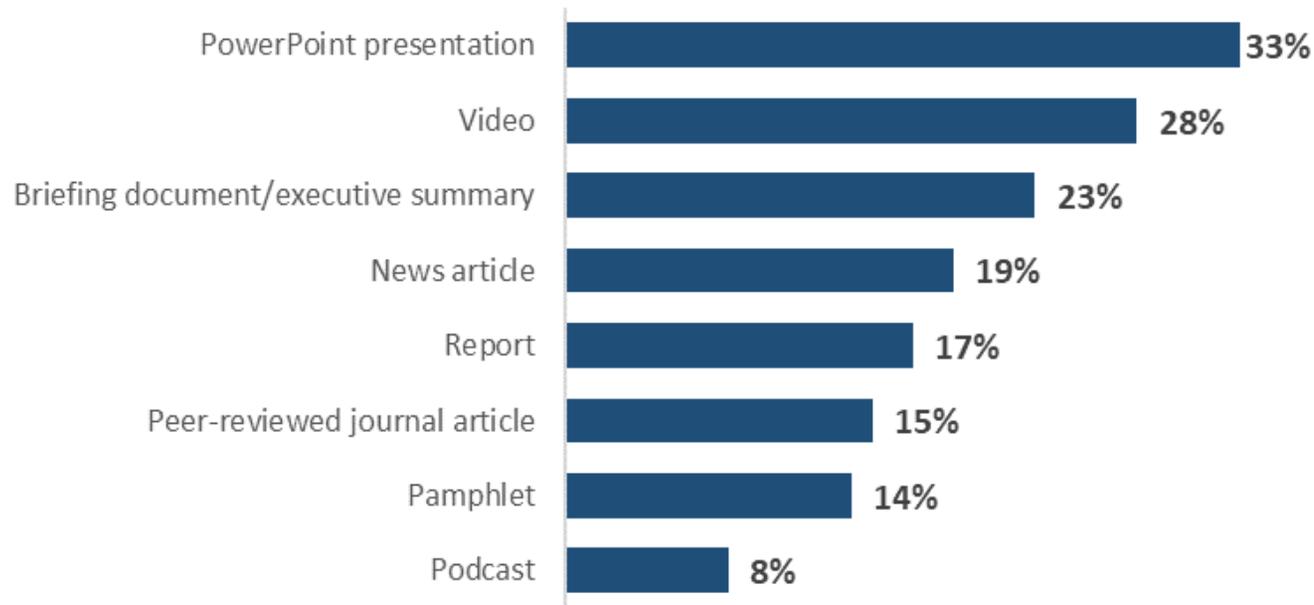
Younger professionals are more likely than their older peers to search by asking their colleagues

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Preferred Formats for Receiving Information

33% prefer PowerPoint presentations

- **Frontline workers** also prefer videos and pamphlets

- **Directors and administrators** also prefer briefing documents

- **Legal professionals:** briefing documents

Format	Percentage
PowerPoint presentation	33%
Video	28%
Briefing document/executive summary	23%
News article	19%
Report	17%
Peer-reviewed journal article	15%
Pamphlet	14%
Podcast	8%

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Electronic Subscription Lists

30% subscribe to a listserv, electronic newsletter, or other type of subscription list

- **Characteristics that make listservs most useful:**
  - Concise content
  - Up-to-date information
  - Information that is immediately relevant to their work

- **Suggestions for communicating through listservs:**
  - Use a list format for easier reading
  - Include hyperlinks
  - Add photos and infographics
  - Make sure that newsletters are mobile-friendly
  - Use consistent formatting so readers know where to go

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Sharing Child Welfare Information

70% of respondents share information through face-to-face conversation

- **Frontline workers** share through face-to-face interactions

- **Higher-level professionals (including supervisors and managers)** and **legal professionals** share by email more often than face-to-face

Method	Percentage
Face-to-face conversation	70%
Email	66%
At a meeting at your organization or agency	44%
Through a training, conference, or workshop	25%
By telephone	19%
Through social media	9%
Through an electronic listserv, newsletter, or subscription list	3%
Through an online community of practice	2%

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Use of Mobile Devices

Almost all respondents (98%) report having a mobile device

- 36% report using their mobile device to search for, access, or share child welfare information at least several times a week

- 20% report <u>never</u> using their mobile device for this purpose

Activity	%
Checking email/calendar	82%
Communicating case related information with colleagues	57%
Communicating with clients	53%
Researching information to share with clients	48%
Looking up policies/procedures	45%
Documenting contact notes	31%
Accessing or completing forms	28%
Accessing professional development	23%
Learning about promising practices	21%

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Use of Mobile Devices: Perceived Barriers

- Over 50% of respondents cited a **lack of relevant mobile applications** as a barrier to using mobile devices to access, search for, and share child welfare information

- Other barriers to information access included **lack of time** to search for information, **lack of access** to resources, and **not knowing** where to search

	Percentage
Lack of mobile applications relevant to my work	**53%**
Workplace rules about using mobile devices	43%
Limited access to Wi-Fi at my workplace	41%
My own technology skills	20%

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Use of Mobile Devices: Perceived Barriers

Technology skills are reported as a reason more often by professionals working with Tribes (31%), professionals over the age of 50 (33%), and legal professionals (32%)
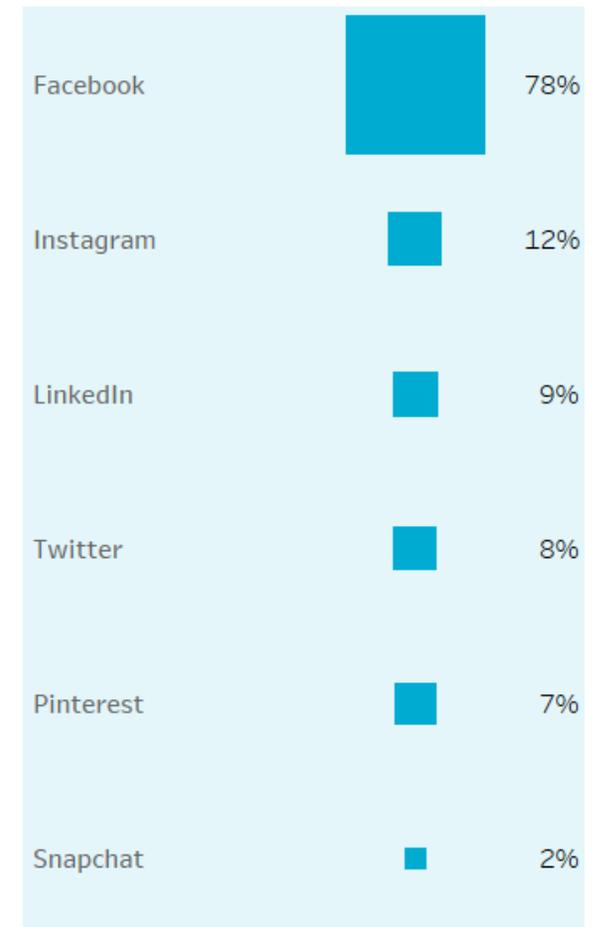
Legal professionals are also **less likely to cite access to Wi-Fi or workplace rules** as a barrier to mobile device use

Use of Social Media

About half of respondents (48%) reported using social media to search for, access, or share information about child welfare

- **Younger professionals (ages 21-30) are more likely to use social media** for child welfare purposes

- **Facebook** is most frequently used for child welfare purposes

- Social media is used to **share interesting articles** or **locate, children, parents, or families**

Platform	Percentage
Facebook	78%
Instagram	12%
LinkedIn	9%
Twitter	8%
Pinterest	7%
Snapchat	2%

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Professionals Working with Tribal Organizations

Child welfare professionals working with Tribal organizations search for, receive, and share information more frequently

- **These professionals report:**
  - **Less experience** in the child welfare field, although they are older on average
  - **More consistent access to the Internet**, including better access to Wi-Fi
  - Attending **trainings, conferences, or workshops** more frequently

- **These professionals are more likely to:**
  - Use their mobile devices to **access podcasts and online courses**, and to learn about **promising child welfare practices**
  - Cite **technology skills as a barrier** to using their mobile devices to access child welfare information
  - **Use social media** for child welfare purposes

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Future Professionals: Use of Mobile Devices

Future child welfare professionals are more active in their use of mobile devices

- The majority (83%) **use a mobile device** to search for, access, or share information at least several times a day

- Currently **use mobile devices less for child welfare purposes** than current professionals...

- But only 13% cite **technology skills as a barrier** to using mobile devices for child welfare purposes (compared to 18% of current frontline workers)

Future Professionals: Use of Social Media

Future child welfare professionals share information in different ways than current professionals

- Future professionals **are less** likely to share information through email or telephone

- Future professionals are **more likely** to share information through social media (31% versus 10%)

- Future professionals are also **more likely to use social media** for child welfare purposes

Key Takeaway: As future professionals enter the workforce, mobile devices and social media may become more important channels for information dissemination

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Phase 5: Next Steps

- Finalize analysis

- Provide state and audience specific reports

- Create a public dataset

- Develop profiles for specific professional roles

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