

## **SUPERVISOR TRAINING PROJECT**

### **Arkansas**

**Interview with Tammie Langston, DCFS Professional Development**

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Arkansas child welfare professionals have access to two (2) major training systems within their state. (1) The Department of Human Services (DHS), Organizational Development and Training (ODT) unit provides change management services and professional development opportunities to employees throughout ten (10) Divisions (one of which is the Division of Children and Family Services-DCFS) and four (4) Administrative Offices. (2) The Arkansas Academic Partnership in Public Child Welfare supports the development of the child welfare professional by infusing child welfare curriculum across academic disciplines and providing classroom and field training relevant to the child welfare policies and practices.

DCFS has two primary contracts within the academic partnership: one with [UALR/MidSOUTH](#) and one with [UA Fayetteville](#). UALR/MidSOUTH provides classroom trainings for new DCFS field staff, field training in two (2) demographic areas, and continuing education opportunities on topics relevant to child safety, permanency and well-being. UALR/MidSOUTH is also responsible for providing Foster/Adopt PRIDE training and assists the Division with the completion of foster/adoptive applicant SAFE home studies.

UA Fayetteville sub-contracts with several Universities to provide field training to child welfare professionals new to the Division. Field training supports the transfer of learning from the classroom experience into professional practices with families. Field training for new field staff is provided for one year. In addition to field training, these Universities provide advanced practice education (one on one training) for staff with one or more years of child welfare experience as well as some classroom trainings required by the Division.

The universities who subcontract with UA Fayetteville are: Arkansas State University, Arkansas Tech University, UA Fayetteville, UA Monticello, UA Pine Bluff, Southern Arkansas University, Harding University, and Philander Smith College. The last two are private universities. All are social work programs with the exception of Arkansas Tech University.

### **Supervisor Requirements**

In order to become a supervisor in Arkansas, one must hold a bachelor's level degree in social work, sociology, psychology or other related field (though social work is preferred), and have four years of experience in child welfare or human services. Supervisors are required to take 24 hours of training per year as defined in the Division's Training Plan.

## **Pre-service Training**

All supervisors hired within the department are required to attend a legislatively mandated training (Executive Order 86-1) within six months of assuming the position and prior to performing any personnel type of actions. Not specific to child welfare, this four day in-person training includes the following courses:

- Arkansas Government Basics
- Hiring and Performance Measurement
- Interpersonal Communication
- Grievance Prevention & Handling
- Administering Discipline

ODT provides this training to all Departmental Supervisors. Once a supervisor completes Executive Order 86-1 training, s/he returns for a second week of training – Leadership in a High Performing Work Culture. This 3 day workshop focuses on coaching, teamwork, and conflict resolution. It is preferred that new supervisors complete, at a minimum, the Executive Order 86-1 training before attending a child welfare specific supervisor training offered by UALR/MidSOUTH.

The UALR/MidSOUTH new supervisor training program is competency based and structured around three principles of supervision: administrative, supportive, and educational. Because the legislatively mandated training is so focused on administrative skills, this training targets the supportive and educational functions of supervision within a child welfare context. Instructional methods are based on brain science.

Topics include: caseload monitoring/management, individual monitoring, unit monitoring, supervisory ethics, and the role of data in managing. Supervisors also complete a selected reading on child welfare supervision and then make a class presentation on the topic that interested them.

### [New Supervisor Training Outline](#)

An individual training needs assessment is conducted after supervisors attend the new supervisor training through UALR/MidSOUTH. This information is used to see how well participants have mastered the training competencies and to assess their future training needs. Individual training assessment plans are also utilized. The OJT component also includes an evaluation. Supervisors also have an annual performance assessment with their managers and often have regular case consultations and professional development discussions.

Through a collaborative effort, the Academic Partnership has created a “non-traditional model of “on-the-job training (OJT) for new supervisors promoted within the division. This program is “non-traditional” because it is offered to new supervisors independent of UALR/MidSOUTH classroom instruction-helping the Division address an existing gap between the time a new supervisor assumes supervisory duties and the time s/he is able to attend the UALR/MidSOUTH training.

Structured around safety, permanency and well-being, a field trainer initiates the training with a new supervisor within the first two weeks of being on the new job. The OJT instructional method is based on a coaching and mentoring model.

Each OJT category (safety, permanency and well-being) takes 4 weeks to complete and involves a self-assessment, tutorial study and structured assignments that align with Administrative, Educational and Supportive functions within each category. Training objectives include:

- Increased knowledge and understanding of effective child welfare practice and supervision in the several topic areas. Some these include:
  - Safety and risk
  - Protective factors
  - Protection plans
  - Defining permanency and key permanency concepts
  - Permanency and child and family development
  - Permanency and the Judicial system
  - Impact of trauma
  - Physical and mental health needs of children
  - Educational needs of children
  - Building family capacity for effective problem solving
- Use administrative compliance and quality data to proactively identify strengths and needs of the unit and individual workers.
- Gain experience in conducting face to face supervisory case consultations to review case plans, services and progress toward goals.
- Gain experience in field observation of worker’s engagement with families and community providers.

[Participant Manual to Supervising for Safety, Permanency, and Well-Being: On-the-Job Training for Promoted New Supervisors](#)

Arkansas is also in the process of developing a competency based training model for field trainers to promote ongoing professional development in alignment with the growth of supervisory practices within the Division.

Supervisors also complete a SUPER CHRIS training, which is designed to help with the transition of using the state’s SACWIS system as a management tool rather than for case documentation. This training is offered on an individual basis and is provided one-on-one between a MidSOUTH CHRIS trainer and a new supervisor.

A supervisor hired from outside of the Arkansas DCFS system, though uncommon, may be required to take the new staff training for family service workers prior to the training for supervisors. This will allow them to get more familiar with the role and policies within Arkansas. This training consists of eight modules, with each module being three full days. The training is conducted over 10 weeks with each module being followed up with OJT to help with the transfer of learning. If a new supervisor were attending this training they would have specific supervisor OJT assignments. The new staff training is also offered through UALR/MidSOUTH, with field trainers helping new staff complete and process OJT activities.

**Ongoing Training**

Arkansas has numerous ongoing training opportunities for supervisors. In conjunction with the [Mountains and Plains Child Welfare Implementation Center](#) (MPCWIC), Arkansas focused on improving supervisory supports and tools within their system. As part of these efforts the state implemented a Learning Circle (LC) process tool. The Division, in partnership with MidSOUTH, currently provides initial Learning Circle training to supervisors. This two day class focuses on the principles of an effective learning circle and general facilitation skills, followed by a day of practicing facilitating a learning circle.

Supervisors who have completed the LC training are expected to implement (within 45 days) the LC process with their teams.

University partners provide coaching support to supervisors to help maintain fidelity to the learning circle model. As a part of the coaching role, the coach attends the practice portion of the Learning Circle training. The Academic Partnership provided a separate, coaching training designed to help prepare them for their role as a coach.

Supervisors are reporting they're seeing teams grow stronger as a result of the Learning Circle process, and are discovering things about their team members they were surprised to learn.

The Learning Circle training, along with other child welfare focused trainings, can be used to help satisfy the 24 hour annual training requirement.. Because Arkansas has some very small offices that don't necessarily lend themselves to supporting learning circles well, this training may not be mandated for all supervisors. All supervisors, however, will have the opportunity to have more training in facilitation skills.

Charmaine Brittain, formerly with the Butler Institute for Families, modified her learning circle training materials that are being used in Arkansas.

Charmaine Brittain's 2011 Introductory Manual to Learning Circles is available here: <http://www.nrcoi.org/rcpdfs/LCManualMay2011Final.pdf>.

Arkansas also contracts with [Hornby Zeller Associates, Inc.](#) to provide training on a structured decision making process. This process has been adopted by the Division to help create a more consistent model of decision making regarding safety of children throughout the state. This training series is called "Structured Decision Making or SDM" and uses varied focuses depending on the target audience (investigators, case managers and supervisors).

As a part of the on-going training evaluation process, the Division requested the development of a SDM training specific to supervisory practices aligned to support the safety assessment process being taught. The first round of this training was completed this past fall, and will be continued and mandatory for all supervisors to complete.

Arkansas has also partnered with the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences ([ARBest - University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences](#)) to provide a trauma informed awareness training. The focus for supervisors was to begin to think about how they help their staff consider actions and decisions and the trauma impact these actions may have on the child and family. This training initiative is a continued effort through UAMS and the academic partnership. The first wave of training was conducted in person, with subsequent training sessions being provided in a blended learning environment.

Dr. Kramer, UAMS-AR BEST Program, conducts webinars for the blended training format from Little Rock. The webinars are broadcast to five different learning groups across the state. Dr. Kramer presents information and interacts with participants for the first 45 minutes. Field trainers, who are in each of the five learning groups, then facilitate discussion using a guided discussion tool to work with the learning group on transfer of knowledge and to help process what they just heard. This training is mandated for all staff, so supervisors are participating with their workers. The state is legislatively required to provide one hour of training each year on grief and loss, and have adapted this to have more of a trauma-focus. Materials from the [National Child Traumatic Stress Network \(NCSTN\)](#) are utilized for this training.

Another mandatory training for supervisors is Managing Difficult Encounters. This training focuses on communication skills that help de-escalate violence and difficulty when working with families. One academic partner developed training including a video of staff talking about the encounters they've had.

This is also offered through the academic partnership and supervisors take this course with their caseworkers.

Arkansas has partnered with the Consortium for Children to provide training on conducting a structured family home assessment. This training includes two days of basic training, with an additional one-day course specific to supervisors. This is offered quarterly and is mandatory for all supervisors to take.

### [Consortium for Children](#)

#### **Professional Development**

Each of the 10 Area Directors (responsible for managing field practices) receive support from within the academic partnership and may request specific training for supervisors. An academic partner coordinator or lead trainer meets regularly with Area Directors to discuss what their training needs are and what they need to support their staff. The DCFS Training Manager also participates in these meetings at least on a quarterly basis.

Supervisors use the state's Supervisory Practice Model (another product of the MPCWIC initiative) as a tool to help assess what the training needs are relevant to their area.

### [Supervisory Practice Model](#)

UALR/MidSOUTH also offers continuing education workshops as part of their contract with the state. They structure these around some of the supervisor level competencies as well as feedback they receive from previous training evaluations. One of the newer continuing education programs is Managing Across Multiple Generations. These are generally voluntary and may not be specific to only DCFS staff.

Arkansas holds an annual three-track multidisciplinary child abuse conference. The tracks consist of investigative (law enforcement, DCFS investigators, first responders, etc.), mental health, and case management (juvenile court, CASAs, teachers, etc.). They are partnering with the Children's Trust Fund to add a child abuse prevention track for 2014. Supervisors are able to attend this conference, which generally includes close to 400 people.

UALR/MidSOUTH also provides 35 tuition waivers/scholarships to DCFS staff to attend summer school classes on substance abuse. All of the partner Universities also sponsor staff to attend various conferences related to program development.

With support from Casey Family Programs some field staff and central office staff have attended different external trainings related to permanency, differential response program development, and team decision making.

Supervisors are also able to attend a host of annual conferences offered by partner agencies, such as the annual CASA conference, parenting network conference, or national regional protection center. Supervisors can submit a formal application request to their Assistant Director for any conference they wish to attend.

#### **Supervisor Supports**

The University of Arkansas has created a new web based platform known as "Knowledge Net." The vision of Knowledge Net is to foster the development of a community of knowledge throughout the state. While much more work is needed to fulfill this vision, Tommy Milford, UAF, has already helped Arkansas begin to make these connections through the use of Learning Circle tools, discussion forums, automated newsletters and a library of resources and RSS feeds from sources such as the Child Welfare

Information Gateway. Another long range goal for the state is to create a community of service website to connect staff and supervisors to local resources.

Knowledge Net became a valuable tool in the distribution of valuable products associated with the MPCWIC project including:

- A guide for supervisors on how to conduct regular team meetings with their staff.
- An online supervisory handbook that organizes critical areas of information that is helpful to supervisors.
- A hiring guide and Realistic Job Preview Video to help supervisors screen for and hire family service workers more prepared for the challenges faced by child welfare professionals.

The Division also produces an employee newsletter, which is distributed on a quarterly basis. This newsletter is shared with staff and external stakeholder groups and is designed to share Division specific accomplishments and progress related to program improvement activities.

#### [DHS | DCFS Newsletters and Publications](#)

The Assistant Director and other Executive Staff and stakeholders meet quarterly with supervisors across the state. These meetings generally target some type of skill or development activity. Investigative supervisors meet with one another on a quarterly basis as do Differential Response supervisors and staff.

There is an expectation for Area Directors to meet with county supervisors on a monthly basis. Several Area Directors also meet with all of their area staff on a quarterly basis.

The Division Director has also made a commitment to travel the state to meet in person with area staff at least twice per year, if not more often. She has also put aside time to shadow workers in the field to increase her understanding of what is happening and directly incorporates the lessons gained from these experiences into her leadership.