

## **SUPERVISOR TRAINING PROJECT**

### **Vermont**

**Interview with Sarah Gallagher, Child Welfare Training Partnership Coordinator**

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#### **Supervisor Requirements**

Vermont strongly prefers that supervisors hold a Master's degree. For those with a Bachelor's degree, Vermont prefers that one has 18 months of previous experience in child welfare.

All supervisors and child welfare staff must complete a minimum of 30 training hours per year. Training does not need to be supervisory specific.

#### **Ongoing Training**

Because Vermont has a very low supervisor turnover rate and small supervisor population, there is rarely opportunity for large training classes. As a result, Vermont must be creative in offering effective and cost efficient trainings. The State has developed a holistic framework in their approach to supervisory training and support. Trainings opportunities are organized at the state, agency and division level. Vermont's model supports the idea that group training fosters more effective learning; therefore, supervisors and their staff are trained together.

#### **General Supervisory Training**

At the state level, Vermont's learning center, The Summit, hosts a nine-day Supervisory Development Program. This program is available for all supervisors in state government and is therefore not child welfare specific. Each participant has his/her own development plan and takes courses appropriate to his/her plan. Courses cover the following topics: Effective Communication; Enhancing Productivity; Interviewing and Hiring; Managing Your Time; and The Universe of Labor Relations.

At the agency level, Vermont offers a 3-day Supervisory Foundations Class. This training focuses on core topics essential to child welfare supervision, including:

- Introduction to Emotional Intelligence
- Research and Concepts to Consider
- The Supervisor's Role
- Motivating Staff
- Communication Skills
- Legal and Policy Issues
- Managing Performance.

## Child Welfare Training for Supervisors

Vermont has partnered with the following entities regarding training for supervisors: University of Vermont; the National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement; and the Northeast and Caribbean Implementation Center.

All employees who are new to the divisions, including supervisors and managers, complete the same Foundations and Core training as social workers. The State develops trainings for all child welfare staff when a new practice or policy is implemented. Separate training sessions for supervisors are often provided to teach how to supervise the new change.

Over the last two years 24 of our 26 eligible supervisors have completed the Leadership Academy for Supervisors. Vermont supervisors complete the Leadership Academy for Supervisors on-line as a cohort. Learning Networks are provided by the CWTP to bolster learning and leadership throughout the program.

Each year, the CWTP works with supervisors and managers to assess training needs for supervisors and offer training to meet those needs. In FY 2013, the following courses were provided:

Course	Syllabus
<b>Teaming and Group Supervision Skills for Supervisors</b>	Deepen group supervision skills in the context of a teaming approach to the assessment of safety and risk, case planning, child placement, permanency planning and case management.
<b>Exploring Transformative Supervision</b>	Designed to assist supervisors to explore and practice skills for supporting caseworkers to develop capacity for solution focused and family centered child welfare practice.
<b>Supervisor Learning Circles</b>	Six days per year, CWTP supports this self-directed learning process for supervisors. Topics for each learning circle are identified by supervisors. Planned topics include: Developmental Trauma and Brain Development; Transformative Supervision skills; Strengthening Families.
<b>Supporting Safe Practice: Preventing Professional Dangerousness</b>	This course introduces the concepts of professional dangerousness, how supervisors can recognize these thinking errors in their supervisees, and how to address.

## Supervisor Supports

All new supervisors are assigned a mentor from another office to work with during their first 6 months on the job. The [Mentoring of Supervisors](#) document provides more details on this program.

There are several opportunities for supervisors to meet with one another in Vermont. Supervisors meet bi-monthly at the state level and then with division leadership staff in the off months. These meetings are modeled around the learning circles approach. Supervisors decide on topics prior to each of these meetings. Training is provided or arranged by the CWTP. These meetings serve as an opportunity to reflect on one's practice and learn from one another. Additionally, front end supervisors meet monthly to support assessment/investigation practice.

Vermont uses the curriculum "[Building a Model and Framework for Supervision](#)" for individual training sessions with supervisors. The National Resource Center for Family-Centered Practice and Permanency Planning and the National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement created this document to examine the responsibilities and needs of supervisory staff and develop an organizational framework to support effective child welfare supervision. Supervisors in Vermont use this curriculum to self-study and then meet with a mentor to review the materials and ask questions.

Additionally, the training coordinator assigned to each district discusses training needs with supervisors on an individual basis and makes recommendations for available trainings, as well as provides the opportunity to review pertinent training materials with the supervisor. The training coordinator also serves as a mentor and coach to the supervisors in his/her region.