

The Guidelines for Assessing Trainer Content Expertise

The OCWTP is in the process of entering workshop information into E-Track. This requires that we have accurate, up-to-date information about each workshop, and that we determine that trainers have expertise to train those particular workshops. This guideline was developed to help with that assessment. It should be used with the *Content Outline Checklist*, as you will need to assess both the trainer's content expertise, and the workshop content, structure and training methods.

Evaluating Levels of Expertise

1. Strong Experience and Knowledge= Approved as a Content Expert

Indicators:

- Trainer's resume reflects considerable educational and experiential background in the topic area.
 - Trainer's resume contains evidence of child-welfare related experience.
 - Trainer can provide detailed, insightful information about the topic area, current literature, and how it applies to child welfare.
 - Trainer can identify areas within the broad content area in which he doesn't feel competent to train.
 - Trainer can discuss current standards, research, and dilemmas of the topic area.
- [Click Here To See Example](#)

2. Inadequate Experience and Knowledge=Not Approved as a Content Expert

Indicators:

- Resume contains little or no evidence of educational background in the content area.
 - Resume contains little or no evidence of the trainer having experience in the content area she proposes to train.
 - The trainer is unable to discuss the proposed content area in depth.
 - Trainer is unable to discuss current standards, research, and dilemmas of the topic area.
 - Trainer is minimally able to relate content to child welfare issues.
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3. Undetermined Experience and Knowledge =Further Consideration Needed

Indicators:

- Trainer's resume reflects past, but no recent experience in the content area.
- Trainer's resume reflects experience in the content area, but no experience working with children and families served by the PCSA's.

- Trainer has general knowledge about the content area, but is not up to date about current standards or current knowledge in the field.
- Trainer has life experience, but no professional experience. Trainer discusses the topic are within the context of her own experience, but does not consider the broader context, issues and dilemmas of the topic area.

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Suggested Questions to Ask Trainers When Evaluating Content Expertise

The questions below are suggestions only. They are not meant to be asked in a linear fashion, nor will they gather all the information you need to fully assess the trainer's level of expertise. Specific questions should be formulated for the specific topic area and training audience.

Following are suggested questions. Examples of general questions are in regular font; examples of questions for specific topic areas are *italicized*.

Background Education and Experience

- How does your education impact your ability to train in the field of child welfare?
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- What additional training have you acquired in the content area?
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- What journals, books, etc. would you recommend that you found particularly helpful?
- What are the most important issues or concepts you want workshop participants to understand?

Trainer Understands the Child Welfare System

Trainers whose content area is in a field related to child welfare (but not in a public children services agency) will need to provide evidence they understand the child welfare system, dilemmas in the field, and how their content area relates to child welfare workers, supervisors, or caregivers.

- What is your understanding of fundamental child welfare principles?
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- Do you have any concerns regarding current child welfare practice/policy? If so, how would you discuss those concerns if training participants raise the issue?
- In what ways do the field of child welfare and your field of expertise differ on a philosophical level?

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- How does your topic area relate to child welfare work?
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Standards, Dilemmas, Research

- Are there specific interventions or models you would include in a workshop on this topic? What are they? Who developed them? Why do you find them useful?
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- What is the biggest issue or dilemma in your topic area today? What is your opinion on the issue?
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- Who are considered the experts in your field? Where do they reach agreement and where do they differ? What is your opinion? How will you handle discussion of topic areas where there are significant differences of opinion in the field?
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NOTE:

Some trainers suggest they can train any subject matter if given the curriculum or information. Explain that our system contracts with trainers who are content experts; training skills alone are not enough to be approved to train.

1. Strong Experience and Knowledge= Approved as a Content Expert

Example: A trainer suggests training a workshop on how to help prepare adolescents for independent living. He was an adolescent caseworker, specializing in independent living preparation. He ran independent living groups, worked with adolescents in foster care to prepare them for independent living, and negotiated coaching and mentoring relationships with community members for those teens. He can explain the latest evidence-based independent living programs and talk about both their strengths and limitations. His outline includes detailed information, clear purpose and objectives for the exercises, and an up-to-date bibliography. This trainer should be approved to train in this content area.

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2. Inadequate Experience and Knowledge=Not Approved as a Content Expert

Example: A trainer wants to train on communicating with adolescents. She has a bachelor's degree in education and taught high school students for three years. She enjoyed working with adolescents. However, her interaction with students was limited to the classroom. When prompted for specific information on communication strategies, she gave vague, general explanations, with very few specific examples. She was not able to identify any methods of communicating with adolescents that had been validated by research nor was she able to identify any journals or scholarly works which focus on this topic. This trainer should not be approved to train in this content area.

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Undetermined Experience and Knowledge =Further Consideration Needed

Example #1: A trainer wants to train on drug exposed infants. She has considerable knowledge on indicators and medical treatment of drug exposed infants that she acquired while doing a research paper in college several years ago. She has kept current in the literature, and can easily discuss the current issues, and latest research. She is an intake caseworker at a local PCSA and has conducted investigations where she had to place drug exposed infants in foster care.

Result of Evaluation: This trainer could be approved to train in the topic area of identifying drug exposed children. However, unless she gained more experience in direct casework with drug exposed infants and their families, she should not be approved to train on casework interventions, or foster care interventions for drug exposed infants.

Example #2: A trainer wants to train on advocacy for drug-exposed infants. She has been fostering for 12 years, including therapeutic care with several children, and has adopted a drug exposed infant. She is very knowledgeable about pre-natal drug exposure, not only through her experience, but by attending conferences and reading literature about the issues and dilemmas in the field of drug-exposed children and advocacy. She fought long and hard to obtain services for her adopted infant, and started a family advocacy network for families who have drug exposed infants. She has little patience for people who cannot or will not go to great lengths to advocate for appropriate services for children with these problems.

Result of Evaluation: The trainer could train a workshop on advocacy if she developed an understanding and empathy for families who are unable to engage in the type of advocacy she conducted for her child.

Note: RTCs may call IHS staff for assistance in situations where it is difficult to determine whether the trainer has adequate expertise.

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- How does your education impact your ability to train in the field of child welfare?

You have a bachelor's degree in criminology. What courses did you take that directly relate to working with unruly adolescents?

How did your college education prepare you to train foster caregivers on working with adolescents who abuse drugs or alcohol?

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- What additional training have you acquired in the content area?

Please explain the specific skills you learned in the 5-day training you attended on Parent-Child Interaction Therapy.

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- What is your understanding of fundamental child welfare principles?

How do you balance a domestic violence victim's right to self-determination (i.e.: her right to stay with the perpetrator) with the child's right to be free of abuse?

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- In what ways do the field of child welfare and your field of expertise differ on a philosophical level?

Successful completion of drug addiction treatment may take longer than a year for some parents. The children may be in placement during that year. How do you reconcile this with the requirement that PCSA's file for termination of parental rights after the child has been in placement 12 out of 22 months?

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- How does your topic area relate to child welfare?

Can you explain how caseworkers would use conflict mediation skills in their work with families?

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- Are there specific interventions or models you would include in a workshop on this topic? What are they? Who developed them? Why do you find them useful?

I see your workshops on understanding adult perpetrators of sexual abuse, includes Dr. Anna Salter's "Deviant Cycle." Why did you choose to use this model rather than one of the many others that are available in the literature?

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- What is the biggest issue or dilemma in your topic area today? What is your opinion on the issue?

In most communities there is tension between child welfare caseworkers and domestic violence shelter workers. How do you think these issues can be resolved so that children are protected and victims of domestic violence are given the support they need?

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- Who are considered the experts in your field? Where do they reach agreement and where do they differ? What is your opinion? How will you handle discussion of topic areas where there are significant differences of opinion in the field?

Can you briefly describe the article “The Future of Child Welfare Practice” that you cite in your reference list? Another example: Some mental health therapists think that Eye Movement Desensitization Reprogramming (EMDR) is very effective in helping clients recover from traumatic experiences. Others dispute those claims. What do you think?

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