

Child welfare matters.

Improving organizations, making a difference



Fall, 2006

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New or expanded training initiatives are key to many child welfare agency program improvement plans. This issue focuses on innovative approaches used to ensure that training moves agencies toward improved outcomes for children and families.

We highlight recent work helping agencies assess their training systems—a comprehensive way of looking at training and how it relates to an agency's key internal and external management systems. We talk with the director of a strong training system that focuses on agency outcomes and involves external stakeholders. We also highlight training developed for county managers based on needs they identify, training supervisors in coaching and mentoring skills and involving youth in training. We list training resources and a new feature, "In the Field," describes our work with agencies on curriculum review panels. Our fall teleconferences are announced and we point you to an online survey for your feedback of our work. We hope you find this information useful, and we look forward to hearing from you.

Your goal is to help children and families. Our goal is to help you.

Thanks
Peter Watson, Director

Innovations in Training Child Welfare Training System Symposium: A Beginning

The first round of the Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSR) and the resulting program improvement plans highlighted the value of training to advance the organizational and practice improvements child welfare agencies are undertaking to achieve better outcomes for children and their families. To help child welfare agencies improve their training systems, the National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement at the University of Southern Maine and the Butler Institute for Families at the University of Denver recently co-hosted a Child Welfare Training System Symposium, funded by the Children's Bureau, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. This event provided a forum for training managers, executive decision makers and university partners from child

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Creating an Effective Training System

Traditionally, child welfare agencies have focused on developing and strengthening individual components of their training programs. However, since training is such a key factor in implementing and maintaining the organizational and practice improvements identified in many states' program improvement plans, it is critical that agencies recognize the importance of thinking systemically about training, and assure that their training system is fully integrated into the agency's overall efforts to achieve positive outcomes.

By training system, we mean all of the policies, resources, procedures, structures and curricula combined in a coherent whole to provide and support formal and informal instruction, learning opportunities and professional development aimed at improving agency outcomes. Individual components of a training system often include: the training unit itself—management and staffing; training partners within the agency, university, consumer, foster parents and providers; planning activities such as individual training needs

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National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement

a service of the Children's Bureau, US Department of Health and Human Services



Child Welfare Training System Symposium: A Beginning

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welfare agencies in 20 states, Puerto Rico and Washington DC, to understand training from a systems perspective.

The goal of this symposium was to provide opportunities for leaders in child welfare training to confer about quality training systems with peers from other states and facilitators with years of experience in both child welfare and training. Speakers and participants shared strategies, tools, practical examples and approaches proven to help agencies ensure that their training system supports their agency's mission and articulated practice model.

During the symposium participants conducted an in-depth appraisal of their agency's training system using an assessment tool from the recently published *Training System Assessment Guide for Child Welfare Agencies*. (See *Creating an Effective Training System*, page 1.) Participants were asked to rate their training system's effectiveness in supporting and linking with their:

- practice model;
- supervisors;
- management and internal systems, such as policy, QA and case review; and
- external partners.

Participants also discussed several approaches for involving training in the upcoming CFSR, focused on what makes 'good' curriculum and training evaluation, identified the critical role administrators play in assuring effective training systems and learned about various models for productive state/university partnerships. The symposium ended with each state group developing an implementation work plan based on their agency's training system assessment, building on approaches to quality training systems that emerged during the symposium.

Feedback from participants indicated that they found the symposium very helpful, energizing and informative—a valuable learning experience which included positive networking, resource sharing and opportunities to engage in useful discussions and brainstorming on successful ways to implement an efficient training system. Participants commented that having the training managers, executive decision makers and university partners together, instead of just the training managers, facilitated needed changes and improvements in the training system and enhanced coordination with other administrative systems. Attendees urged the sponsors to continue offering events that bring together these three groups—training managers, executive decision makers and university partners—and suggested several ideas for maintaining the momentum built during the symposium. Suggestions included updating the *Training System Assessment Guide for Child Welfare Agencies* to include the life cycle of a training system, supporting regional or national events that focus on training systems, and looking for ways to share information on effective curricula, funding sources and training innovations.



Resources: Useful Websites on Training

National Staff Development and Training Association:
http://nsdta.aphsa.org/pro_dev_inst.htm

Children's Bureau Express: Training:
<http://cbexpress.acf.hhs.gov/index.cfm>

Child Welfare Information Gateway Library:
<http://www.childwelfare.gov/>

Children's Bureau Promising Practices: Training:
<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/cwmonitoring/promise/index.htm>

National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement: Training: <http://www.nrcoi.org>

Creating an Effective Training System

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assessments and annual training plans; training evaluations and approaches to curriculum development, delivery and follow-up. However, for training systems to be helpful management tools, the view must go beyond the individual components and look at the system in its entirety as well as its relationship to other internal administrative systems and its integration into the fabric of the child welfare service delivery system.

At minimum, an effective training system must support:

- **The Agency's Practice Model:** The training system should explain and reinforce the agency's articulated practice model, including three areas that the Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSRs) have found to positively impact outcomes: the quality and frequency of worker visits, the importance of initial and ongoing assessment, and family involvement in service planning.
- **Supervisors:** Supervisors are the key link between administrators and front line child welfare workers. The training system should provide supervisors with needed training in the clinical, administrative and educational aspects of their jobs and engage them in developing and delivering training for their caseworkers.
- **Internal Management Systems:** The agency management team defines the organization's mission, vision, culture and outcomes. The training system can reinforce and promote these concepts if it is effectively linked to key internal management systems such as:
 - the executive leadership team;
 - quality improvement;
 - program planning;
 - information systems;
 - strategic planning; and
 - budget, human resources and field operations.

- **External Partners:** Child welfare agencies do their work in partnership with a wide range of stakeholders. The training system should offer partners consistent, on-going training and cross-training opportunities that build a common knowledge base and strengthen service delivery.

One way for agency leadership to understand the quality of the training their agency provides is to conduct a system level assessment. Such an assessment can analyze how successfully the training system reinforces and promotes the agency's vision, values and practice model. The assessment process should, at minimum, result in a shared understanding of the strategic value and role of the training system to the agency and identification of the components of the training system that need management attention and action. A training system assessment requires agencies to take an outward looking view of training efforts and results. This type of assessment can help managers move from simply overseeing training programs to understanding how an effective training system can serve as a strategic tool to help the agency achieve positive outcomes for children and their families.

To help agencies understand the value of thinking systemically about training and to provide guidance as agency staff conduct an assessment of their training system, the NRCOI has published a *Training System Assessment Guide for Child Welfare Agencies*. (The guide is available online at the NRC website: www.nrcoi.org.) This Guide provides performance principles, related indicators and tools that a child welfare agency can use to assess the extent to which its training system is aligned with the agency's vision, mission, practice model and outcomes. The Guide provides performance principles and related indicators for the four organizational areas that an effective training system should support—case practice, supervisors, internal management systems and external partners.

The NRCOI can help you think through an assessment of your agency's training system to ensure the assessment meets the needs of your agency. Specifically, we can help you identify an effective assessment approach and customize the performance principles and indicators, the implementation process and the sample assessment tool so they reflect local factors such as your agency's management priorities, the current status of your training system, laws, policies, and regulations that govern your practice model.

For more information, contact Susan Kanak at 207-780-5840 or skanak@usm.maine.edu.

VISIT OUR WEBSITE: www.NRCOI.org

for information about technical assistance services, the Children's Bureau's Training and Technical Assistance Network, our publications and teleconferences, child welfare news and useful links.

Focusing on Outcomes and Involving Stakeholders: Pennsylvania's Child Welfare Training System

Kathy Jones Kelley, Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Child Welfare Training Program shares her observations about child welfare training in Pennsylvania, a state supervised, county administered system. Pennsylvania's training system received the 2005 Quality Award from the National Staff Development and Training Association, and has been recognized as being in the top tier of child welfare training programs in the country.



Could you tell us how the Pennsylvania child welfare training system is structured?

The training program started in 1992 when the county children and youth administrators in Pennsylvania asked about starting a training system that would allow equal opportunity for training statewide. They went to a university to house the program to ensure that the curriculum was of good quality and standardized across the state. It has always been viewed as a collaboration among the state, the counties and the university.

We know that your training system focuses on agency outcomes. Can you tell us about that?

In 1999 and 2000, we had an extensive program evaluation of our training system conducted by the American Humane Association (AHA). The AHA found that we really had positioned ourselves to do a lot more technical assistance for the counties on application of curriculum.

In response to the evaluation, we created an arm of our program that deals with organizational effectiveness and systems change. Every county now has a team assigned to it. In addition to a training specialist—an administrative person who coordinates all the logistics of the training—they also have a practice improvement specialist and a transfer of learning specialist. Practice improvement specialists work with the county to conduct an organizational needs assessment and then work on a training and technical assistance plan that's very connected to the agency outcomes. Transfer of learning specialists actually go on site before and after trainings identified as needing a higher level of support for transferring the learning. This team deals directly with the county's leadership team and training liaison.

We are moving from a system where child welfare staff complete an individual training needs assessment, we put out a calendar and people pick what they want, to a system

where we ask: what are the specific outcomes your agency is working on? Then we work with them to develop a more defined training and technical assistance plan focused on these things. For example, private providers used to be able to pick and choose courses, but now counties, with the help of our practice improvement specialists, identify the training they want provider staff to attend based on the work they're doing together.

Can you tell us about your collaboration with other stakeholders?

Our philosophy is: there are a lot of systems working with children and families served by the child welfare system and everybody needs to be trained in the same thinking. When we work with the county agency, their system partners—private providers, mental health or drug and alcohol—are allowed to register for trainings as well. This has been used most in counties using the system of care model.

The practice improvement specialists actually go into the county and help facilitate discussions with the cross-system partners. For example, Venango County invited their community partners to learn about what they're doing at their agency and we supplied a trainer for that event.

Our training system as a whole has a child welfare training steering committee co-chaired by state and county leadership and is made up of counties, the state, stakeholders, and consumers. This committee advises us on the direction the training system should take.

Tell us more about how you have involved external stakeholders in developing your training.

We have a process for involving actual practitioners in developing our curriculum called Quality Assurance Committees, or QUACs. Any time we start a new curriculum project, we write up a summary, send it out to the counties and recruit supervisors and case workers to participate in the QUAC. Based

Enhancing Supervision

on what the content is, we also recruit people from other systems. For example, when we wrote a domestic violence curriculum, we recruited in the domestic violence community. We might also invite foster parents, family members or whoever we feel is needed to build that curriculum. They make a commitment to come to a meeting where we begin to define the types of learning objectives that will get at what the county needs. Then we write our curriculum and we use the QUAC to give us feedback. Committee members read the curriculum and also attend a pilot training. We ask them to look at specific things we need feedback on, and then we finalize the curriculum.

QUACs are time-limited. We realized that some issues were so important they should have a standing advisory committee. We have a supervisor training advisory committee—a group of supervisors from across the state who advise us on how to best meet the needs of supervisors in our child welfare system. Our leadership academy is made up of administrators who look at how best to train administrators. We also have a diversity task force and a standing committee on our core curricula for new workers and new supervisors.

I think the number one benefit of our extensive collaboration has been that training opportunities are available to ensure our workers are more confident and competent working with children and families. And looking at the entire agency through the organizational needs assessment helps county administrators rethink services they provide to achieve better outcomes for children and families and how to use training and technical assistance as two of their strategies.



Many agencies are developing training for supervisors focused on their critical role in linking agency outcomes and day-to-day case-work practice. Often initiatives involve training and mentoring for supervisors focused on building their skills in coaching their case-workers. For example, under Maine's Supervisory Enhancement Initiative (SEI), all supervisors and most program administrators receive mentoring services. To begin the process, supervisors meet with their program administrators and with mentors from the child welfare agency and the university-based child welfare training institute to develop individual work plans with goals. The goals are related to their own professional development (i.e., making a successful transition from worker to supervisor) or to agency outcomes (i.e., decreasing the number of residential placements). Then, each supervisor has a 2-hour session with their mentor at least 6 times per year. The first session defines activities to meet the goals, and in follow-up sessions supervisors and their mentors discuss progress and practice skills needed. In addition, all supervisors and program administrators participate in a four-day training—organized as 2 two-day sessions 6-8 weeks apart—that includes analyzing videotaped supervisory sessions. The SEI initiative is based on *Staff Supervision in Social Care*, a textbook and curriculum developed by Tony Morrison. For more information, contact Lee Hodgkin at 207-626-5081 or lhodgin@usm.maine.edu or Paul Martin at 207-287-5051 or Paul.J.Martin@maine.gov.

Other resources

The Southern Regional Quality Improvement Center has funded four projects in Mississippi, Arkansas, Tennessee and Missouri that involve strengthening supervisors' ability to enhance case-worker practice skills. The projects involve training for supervisors and follow-up support and mentoring. See www.uky.edu/SocialWork/trc/indexqic.html.

Tell us what you think.

To keep our services as useful to you as possible, we have posted a quick online survey to our website:

<http://muskie.usm.maine.edu/helpkids/survey.htm>

Please take a moment to give us feedback.

Developing County Human Service Director Training

A County Director's Training Advisory Committee ...meets regularly to guide the development of training for county human service managers.

One of the most important steps training managers can take is to assess the need potential participants have for training, and then to work collaboratively with those to be trained to develop and implement new training opportunities. While development of responsive training is a priority for all child welfare agencies, agencies in state supervised, county administered systems find it particularly challenging to develop strong training programs that meet local needs. Colorado has risen to this challenge, both with the ongoing training it offers to counties and with a recent collaborative effort to establish training institutes for county human service agency directors.

The Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS) has an Office of Performance Improvement, and within that office, Workforce Development Services oversees the training opportunities being offered, and works to continually evaluate, revise and expand the offerings to make them more effective. The Director of Workforce Development Services, Art Atwell, meets regularly with agency leadership and with county human service directors across the state to talk about training and local needs. In past meetings Art heard the directors talk about their own need for training, so he undertook a process of assessing their needs and working collaboratively with counties to develop offerings to meet those needs.

Workforce Development Services engaged contractors to conduct a needs assessment of county human service directors, administrators and managers. A survey was undertaken which focused on gathering input on needed content, format of training and technical assistance required to support the training. Thirty-three of the 64 counties participated in the survey. The responses to the survey reflected the diversity of the respondents—in areas such as their professional backgrounds and length of time on the job—and the counties they represent. Respondents most frequently identified the need for training on leadership and management; budgets; ways to organize, motivate and

support staff; state and national policies; and trends and practice. The Director of Workforce Development Services discussed the survey results with the Colorado Social Services Directors Association (CSSDA), and worked with them to prioritize areas to address. The initial plan was to provide two days of training a month for three months for new directors, quarterly training for all directors and an annual forum. After reviewing the needs assessment, CSSDA requested that the new director training be expanded to three days each month.

A County Director's Training Advisory Committee, comprised of four county directors and CDHS field administrators, was formed and now meets regularly to guide the development of training for county human service directors. This collaborative process has resulted in offerings that have been enthusiastically received by county directors.

The training for new directors covered topics such as leadership, management, workplace safety, financial responsibilities of county directors, building a county budget and contracting for legal services. Quarterly training classes for all directors are now offered on topics such as ethics, performance based contracting and managing the media. In addition, the agency has added an annual forum for county human service directors focused on policy and legislative issues to the annual statewide training conference traditionally geared towards caseworkers and supervisors.

For more information on Colorado's county director training, contact Art Atwell, Director, Workforce Development Services, Colorado Department of Human Services, art.atwell@state.co.us, 303-866-7172.



IN THE FIELD...

NRCOI Curriculum Review Panels

Effective curriculum is an essential piece of a successful child welfare training system. The NRCOI is now sponsoring curriculum review panels to provide collaborative peer review to agency curriculum writers, trainers and training managers as they design or revamp their curricula.

To start a curriculum review process, a child welfare agency contacts the NRCOI to discuss the request, provides copies of the curriculum and notifies the ACF Regional Office that a curriculum review panel is being planned. The NRCOI will then work with the agency to determine the assessment criteria, schedule the conference calls, select panel members and facilitate the review process. Panel members include individuals who are directly involved with some aspect of child welfare training—for example, classroom trainers, curriculum writers, academics or training managers. During the review process, panelists provide feedback on the curriculum and often share helpful instructional approaches, trainer's notes, learning activities and tips from similar curricula they use.

Recent curriculum reviews included a panel to assess new supervisory training on behalf of the child welfare agency in California, and a panel to review the New Social Worker Academy curriculum for the Washington State Children's Administration.

Susan Brooks of the Northern California Training Academy, says:

The curriculum review panel was invaluable, and I would highly recommend it. In the past we had used a peer process for reviewing curriculum, but this was a fully neutral process that provided an opportunity to hear from a variety of leading experts who had an unbiased perspective. It also helped in the implementation process. In comparison to other curriculum where we have to make a lot of changes and revisions, the supervisor one has been implemented and we have heard only positive things.

Serving on a panel can also be a valuable experience for those involved in training systems. Lori Herz, a program development specialist in Rhode Island's Child Welfare Institute, served on the California review panel and says:

I thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to learn from others in my field and to share my expertise and experience with them. I inevitably get as many ideas as give...probably even more so! I would love to participate again... it is well worth my time.

If your agency is interested in having curriculum reviewed or you would like to become a reviewer, please contact Susan Kanak at the NRCOI (207-780-5840 or skanak@usm.maine.edu).

Involving Youth as Trainers

Some agencies around the country have organized advisory groups that engage youth in care in educating caregivers, administrators, legislators and the general public about the needs of children and young adults in the child welfare system and in advocating for positive changes. With sufficient orientation and preparation, these organized groups of youth can play a valuable role in providing input on policies and programs, educating legislatures and providing training to child welfare staff, providers and other critical players in child welfare systems. For example, in Maine, the Youth Leadership Advisory Team has delivered a wide range of training to various audiences. For over 12 years, youth have participated in preservice training for caseworkers, providing a half-day workshop on what was helpful and not helpful during their experience in care. Participants often note that this is one of the most valuable parts of the training. More recently, youth delivered training for caseworkers and supervisors in each district office on the importance of sibling relationships. For more information, see www.ylat.org.

Other sites that involve youth in training include:

You Gotta Believe, New York,
www.yougottabelieve.org

California Youth Connection,
www.calyouthconn.org

FALL TELECONFERENCES...

November 9, 2006, 2:30 Eastern

Using Coordinated Technical Assistance to Improve Placement Stability

Coordinated technical assistance from the Children's Bureau's Training and Technical Assistance Network can help agencies develop comprehensive, effective action plans to make program improvements. This teleconference will highlight an example of this coordinated technical assistance focused on improving placement stability and recruitment and retention of foster families in one district in Florida. It will feature the collaboration among several national resource centers, AdoptUsKids, the State of Florida Department of Children and Families, district staff and community-based care providers. We will discuss the partnership, the roles and responsibilities of all the parties, the model developed and the successful results of the collaboration.

Sharon Tintle, Federal Planning and Reporting Unit, and Linda D. Johns, Foster Care Recruitment and Retention, Florida Department of Children and Families with District staff, and representatives of community-based care agencies

Lynda Arnold, National Resource Center for Child Welfare Data and Technology

Judith and John McKenzie, Collaboration to AdoptUsKids

Janyce Fenton, National Resource Center for Family Centered Practice and Permanency Planning

November 30, 2006, 2:30 Eastern

Enhancing Performance in Contracts: Outcomes and Monitoring

With increasing pressure to achieve outcomes, many child welfare agencies are passing performance expectations on to their contractors by negotiating outcomes in contracts. This teleconference will explore how to use this approach to actually improve performance. Critical steps include: setting the stage for performance, working collaboratively with providers to negotiate outcomes, monitoring agencies vigorously, and supporting expectations with an agency-wide quality improvement program. We will highlight the most recent developments in performance based contracting in Illinois, as agency performance teams monitor new contract expectations focused on permanency and other quality measures.

Erwin McEwen, Deputy Director of Monitoring and Quality Assurance, Illinois Department of Children and Family Services

Other presenters TBA

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