STRENGTHENING CHILD WELFARE SUPERVISION WITH *THE TOOLS FOR EXCELLENCE* PROGRAM

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Overview of This Presentation

- The goal of Professional Development with Child Welfare Supervisors and the Tools for Excellence Program
- Why earlier supervision improvement efforts haven't gotten better results
- Specifics of the Tools for Excellence Program
- Stories from the Field

About the Northern California Training Academy, UC Davis

- The Northern California Training Academy provides training, technical assistance and consultation to 29 counties in Northern California.

- The counties include frontier, rural and urban counties with various training challenges for child welfare staff.

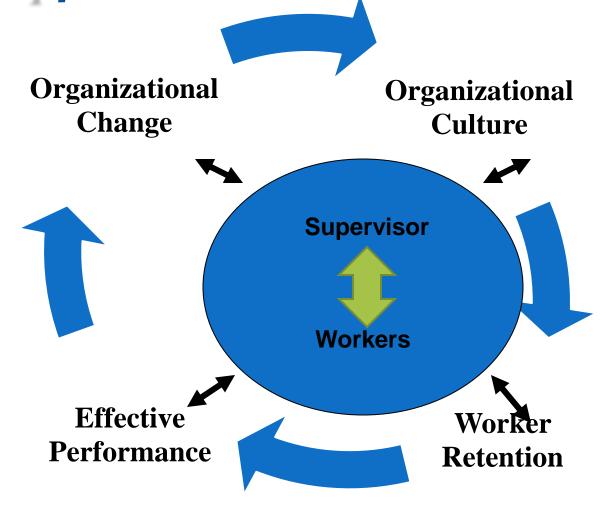# A New Role for Supervisors: Practice Change Agent

- Instead of merely *managing* change, supervisors must *lead* change by

  ▫ Defining what future practice should look like

  ▫ Aligning staff with that vision

  ▫ Inspiring them to make it happen

Why Is Supervision such a Critical Issue Today in Child Welfare?

Because we now know that when child welfare supervision is strengthened and child welfare supervisors are fully supported:

▫ Practice improves.

▫ Better child and family outcomes are achieved.

▫ Worker retention improves.

▫ Measures of supervisor effectiveness, team effectiveness, and worker and supervisor job satisfaction improves.

Conceptual Model

A New Role for Supervisors: Practice Change Agent

Agency Leaders and Stakeholders

Define the mission, vision, values, and desired outcomes for the agency

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Supervisors

Lead the change in practice to achieve those outcomes

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Frontline Workers

Implement practice changes in a team with supervisor and coworkers

Goals and outcomes

- As a result of this program, the combination of solution-focused development and field training assistance is hypothesized to lead supervisors to:
  - Increase caseworker retention
  - Improve children and family outcomes
  - Enable best practices for caseworkers in assessment and intervention with families
  - Improve partnering with the courts
  - Meet System Improvement Plan requirements

Program Model Employed

- Cultural consensus approach to determine curriculum needs of child welfare supervisors

- Interactive learning labs using workplace examples and challenges to facilitate integration of new skills and knowledge presented in the labs

- Mentoring component to reinforce the application of new ideas and skills

- The casework supervision model presented emphasized the interactional component of supervision and the parallel that exists between the worker-supervisor and worker-client relationship.

Program Specifics

- Program takes place over 8-10 months
- A lead Facilitator coordinates with Field trainers, presenters, and course participants
- Learning Labs are two days every 4-5 weeks
- A Reunion takes place about one year after the start of the program
- Each Field Trainer has about 2-3 supervisors
- Field Trainers meet about 2 additional hours per month
- Two meetings with supervisor, manager and field trainer during the program

Model

- Use of 360 degree evaluation through the University of Texas, Austin. Identifies strengths and challenges of individual supervisors in four areas: The data are grouped into five roles (**Communicator, Leader, Manager, Facilitator and Professional**) to provide a framework for understanding the information. These roles represent the most common facets exhibited by those in leadership positions in an organization and are comprised of the typical behaviors displayed for each role. As you move through the report, each role is further defined and the data analysis on items provides a targeted approach to 360 Personal Development Planning.

Content of the monthly Learning Labs

- Both the supervisor and field trainers/mentors attended
- The topics covered included:
  - *Cultural Consensus Model*
  - *How to individualize Social Work Educational Development and Utilize the 360 Degree Evaluation*
  - *How to Use Data to Inform Practice*
  - *How to Create a Healthy and Positive Work Culture in Your Unit*
  - *How to Individualize Casework Supervision*
  - *Self Care/Secondary Traumatic Stress*
  - *Getting Organized and How to Evaluate Performance*
  - *How to Work with Difficult People and How to Overcome Procrastination*
  - *How to Enhance Communication with the Supervisor's Program Manager*
  - *Using Case Conferencing to Teach Unit Social Workers the Professional Skills Needed to Achieve Success in Meeting the CFSR Targets and How to Enhance Communication*
  - *How to Be a Consistent Leader*
  - *Politics of Being in the Middle/Working Effectively with Manager*

Presenters:

- Dr. Lawrence Shulman
  - Interactional Supervision
- Dr. Kim Shackelford
  - Secondary Trauma for Child Welfare Professionals
- Dr. Noel Landyt
  - 360 degree University of Texas, Austin
- Leadership Challenge
- Chapin Hall/UC Berkeley
  - Advanced Analytics

Field Coaching and Mentoring

- The field trainer assigned to each supervisor served as a mentor and coach to help supervisors apply what they have learned in each of the learning labs
- At the end of each learning lab, time for learning cafés/Learning circles with field training and supervisors
- The field trainers met with the supervisors in their agency and consulted by phone and Skype

Field Trainer Characteristics

- Child Welfare experience (current field trainers have mins. of 20 years)
- Understanding and commitment to Solution Focus Practice
- Use of Appreciative Inquiry
- Stay focus on specific task: boundaries
- Strong communication skills
- Understand practice, agency culture, policy connections and change

Purpose of the Evaluation

- Does the Tools for Supervisory Excellence work?

- Does it achieve what was intended?

- In what ways is the program "worthwhile"?
  - Is it worth the resources, money and time?

- What are the benefits?

- What are the challenges?

- What could be improved?

Evaluation Design

- Survey Measures:

  Research methods include survey instruments completed by both supervisors participating in the project and their supervisees. Both participants complete survey instruments at two time periods: At the beginning of the training (*Pretest*) and at the end of the training – 10 months after Pretest (*Posttest*)
  Questions generally asked:

  - Formal case review practices
  - Informal interactions between supervisors and supervisees
  - Work environment and professional culture
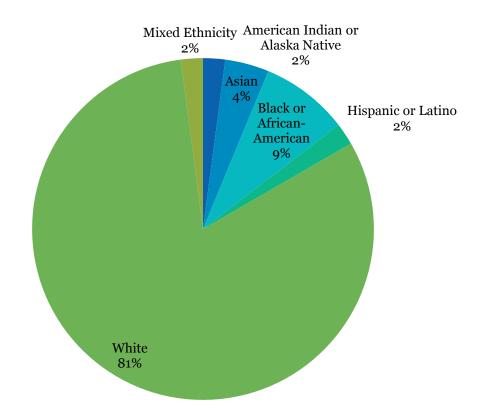
- **Focus Groups**
  - At the end of the 10 month period, evaluators held focus groups to get feedback from participating supervisors. Supervisors also completed a final survey instrument in which they reported on their attitudes about the learning labs and the mentors of the project.

- **360 Feedback**
  - Finally, in an effort to strengthen and enhance the professional development and training of supervisors working in child welfare, UC Davis implemented a 360 degree feedback process for individuals participating in the program.
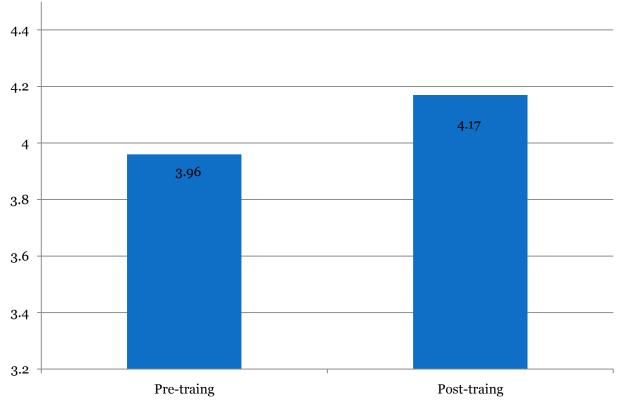
Demographics of Supervisors N=38

- Mean Age = 44.87
- 31 Females, 7 Males
- Education: BA/BS = 8, MA/MS = 4, BSW = 1, MSW = 24, Other = 1
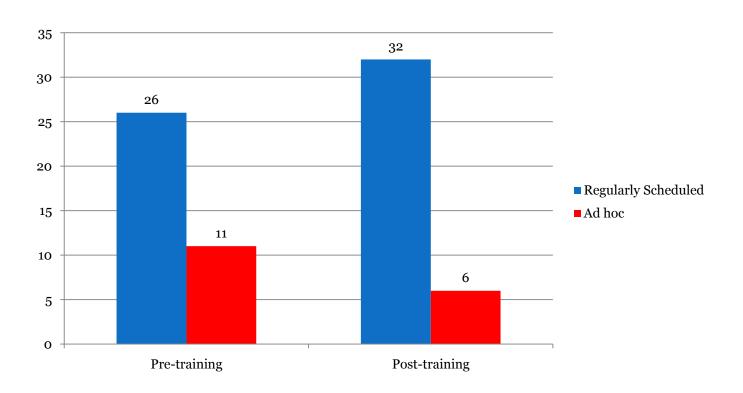- 42% Enrolled Self in Training Program, 58% Enrolled by Supervisor

Supervisors Significantly Increase in *Perceived Effectiveness in Reviewing Cases*

N=38, $t(37) = 2.37$, $p = .02$

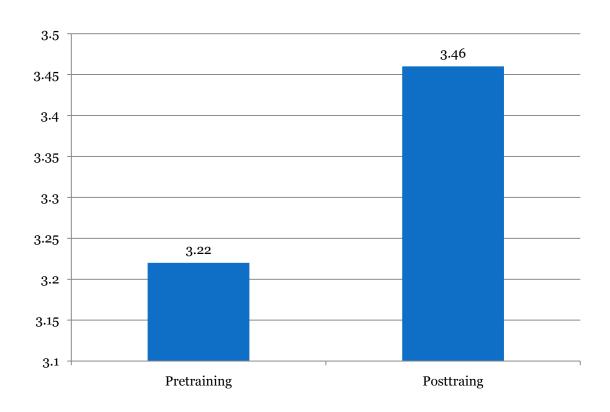# Supervisors reported significant increases in the prevalence of regularly scheduled case review meetings
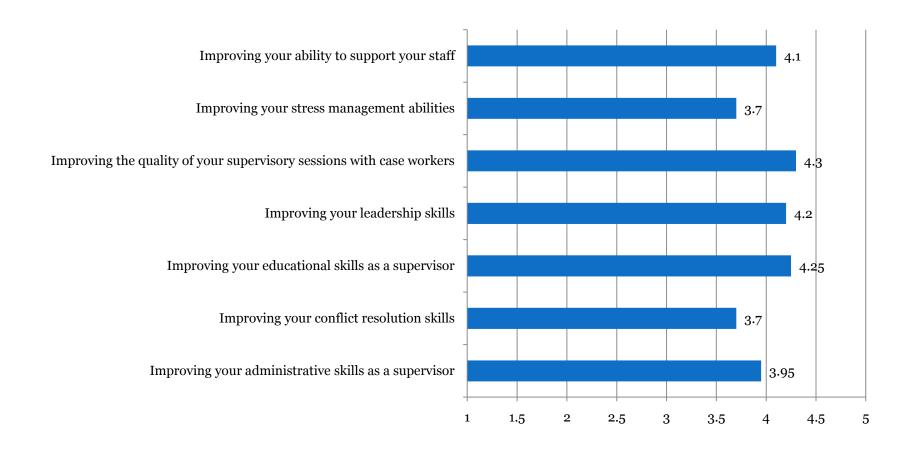## (χ2 (1, *N* = 38) = 4.92, *p* = .04)

Supervisors reported significant Improvements in the Relationships with their Administrators

Supervisors Survey Feedback
Helpfulness of Labs

Survey given at 10 months participating in training (N=38). All questions were answered on a five-point likert scale. (ranging from 5 = *Strongly agree* to 1 = *Strongly disagree*)

Category	Value
Improving your ability to support your staff	4.1
Improving your stress management abilities	3.7
Improving the quality of your supervisory sessions with case workers	4.3
Improving your leadership skills	4.2
Improving your educational skills as a supervisor	4.25
Improving your conflict resolution skills	3.7
Improving your administrative skills as a supervisor	3.95

Supervisors Survey Feedback
Helpfulness of Mentors

All questions were answered on a five-point likert scale (N=38).
(ranging from 5 = *Strongly agree* to 1 = *Strongly disagree*)

Question	Rating
Improving your ability to support your staff	3.85
Improving your stress management abilities	3.7
Improving the quality of your supervisory sessions with case workers	3.9
Improving your leadership skills	3.85
Improving your educational skills as a supervisor	3.75
Improving your conflict resolution skills	3.85
Improving your administrative skills as a supervisor	3.9

Results: Mentors Focus Groups

Themes that emerged:

- **Benefits**
  - Increased Competencies in Supervisors
    - *"Watching supervisors grow and take risks."*
    - *"Watching the supervisors consider how to apply what is being taught to their jobs."*
    - *"Watching participants grow through the experience. Especially for those who faced significant organizational shifts."*

  - Increased Problem-Solving Abilities of Supervisors

Results: Mentors Focus Groups

Themes that emerged:

- **Challenges**
  - Traveling to some of the rural communities to provide mentoring

  - Trying to mentor supervisors in a county that was undergoing so many budget cuts and changing staff role (sups being demoted)

  - Being skilled to deal with Supervisors dealing with "secondary trauma"

Supervisor Focus Group: Emerging Themes: Benefits

- More aware of the impact of the job on staff a renewed desire to continue in Child Welfare

- Validation for the work they do

- Increased ability to connect outcomes with the job

- Developed skills to deal with difficult staff

- Handled staff conflicts in healthy ways

- Dealt with difficult personalities using consistent and measurable strategies.

Supervisor Focus Group Direct Quotes: Benefits

- *"This program has helped me to slow down and be more patient with my workers."*

- *"Being more human instead of like a robot, just trying to get work done."*

- *"Use my unit meetings for more than delivering information – use for interaction, discussion, etc."*

Supervisor Focus Group Direct Quotes: Benefits

- *"My mentor really shared his experiences with me."*

- *"My mentor talked about issues I wanted to talk about."*

- *"I started out not liking the mentor idea but ended up working it out with my mentor."*

- *"My mentor was present while I had a conflict with my Program Manager and asked my mentor to talk to me, but my mentor said she was there to support me, that was great and I felt very supported."*

Program Manager Focus Group

- *"Program helped supervisors to keep staff on track and put the family first. More thoughtful--not just moving cases through. Very good customer service."*

- *"Better follows through with court paperwork. Will go to court with workers if needed. Better understanding of when and what kind of intervention will help."*

- *"Fewer complaints, embraced going to meeting with community partners when pervious supervisors not participating in this type of program would have lacked enthusiasm."*

- *"Understand the value of engaging outside partners to make things better. Committed to TDM and how it benefits communication between all parties."*

360 Results

- The 360 feedback toolset uses a Multi-Rater system.

- Provides information grouped into five roles (Communicator, Leader, Manager, Facilitator and Professional) as a framework for understanding an individual's areas of strength and concern.

- Respondents completed 30 items related to these roles.

Summary of Findings

- Key Findings from the Child Welfare Supervisor Professional Development Training Project (questionnaires and focus groups):

  - Positive change in supervisory practice as measured by the participants

  - Participants and their case workers reported improvement in case review abilities and practices

  - Growth in Professionalism, Supervisory Competence, and Empowerment

  - Improved relationships with staff

So Does the Evaluation Support the Utility of Tools for Supervisory Excellence?

Yes!!

Next Steps

- Development of a Coaching Toolkit for child welfare practice
- Continual Evaluation of the program and refinement
- Managers program beginning 2011