



CHILD WELFARE WORKER TRAINING IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Report to the Legislature



Washington State Department of
CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES



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Executive Summary

This report is prepared in compliance with SSB 5955 Sec. 26 (4) *“The department shall provide a training improvement plan to the relevant committees of the legislature in compliance with RCW 43.01.036 by January 1, 2020, based on the report required under subsection (3) of this section that describes the recommended frequency of trainings and other recommended improvements to child welfare worker training.”*

Introduction

A supported, skilled and informed workforce is central to improving outcomes for children and families in the public child welfare system. The Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF or Department) and the Alliance partner to provide a comprehensive training program for child welfare professionals and tribes. The objective is to build on the foundational training and support transfer of learning of essential practice skills with a commitment to building a safe, authentic culture of learning where professional development is a priority, training and coaching can thrive and sufficient support exists for the DCYF workforce. The curriculum uses principles of adult learning to improve professional development and innovations, such as simulation field-based coaching and team-based learning. These strategies and principles include pre-learning, direct instructions, demonstration, opportunities for skills practice and feedback and follow-up coaching in the workplace.¹ Federal funding requirements shape and support child welfare training. Funding to train DCYF’s child welfare workforce includes a state match. DCYF claims federal IV-E dollars for a majority of the training activities provided by the Alliance.² DCYF closely monitors the Alliance training plan through the Annual Progress and Services Report that is submitted annually to the federal Children’s Bureau at the beginning of the state fiscal year. The Children’s Bureau conducts the Child & Family Services Reviews (CFSRs), which are periodic reviews of state child welfare systems, to achieve three goals:

- Ensure conformity with federal child welfare requirements
- Determine what is actually happening to children and families as they engage in child welfare services
- Assist states in helping children and families achieve positive outcomes

Based on the results of the CFSR, states are required to develop a Program Improvement Plan (PIP) to address areas in their child welfare services identified as needing improvement.

The State of Washington participated in CFSR-Round 3³ in 2018. One of the systemic factors reviewed in the CFSR is Staff and Provider Training. The CFSR found that Washington was not in substantial conformity for Initial and Ongoing Staff Training and identified these two areas as needing improvement. Additionally, revisions in the training curriculum and changes to the mode of delivery were needed to ensure that workers had adequate skills and knowledge for their positions. DCYF is partnering with the Alliance in the development of the PIP where DCYF and the Alliance are working to ensure the transfer of learning and skill development

¹Graner, P.S., Ault, M.M., Mellard, D.F., Gingerisch, R.A. (2012, June 20). Effective Professional Development of Adult Learners. University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning. Retrieved November 27, 2019 from https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Patricia_Graner/publication/275950066_Adult_Learning_PD_white_paper_KUCRLpdf/links/554a2c150cf21ed21358aa44.pdf?inViewer=0&pdfJsDownload=0&origin=publication_detail

² Training delivered by the Alliance is Title IV-E Eligible except for training targeted prior to a child being taken into care (CPS, TANF). The Federal Financial Participation Rate (FFP) is either 75% for training targeted to children in care (such as RCT) and 50% for supervisor/administrative training (non-child welfare specific content) such as SCT.

³ All 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico completed their first review by 2004 and their second review by 2010. For Round 3, states meeting certain criteria may conduct their own case reviews and case-specific interviews using the revised federal Onsite Review Instrument and Instructions, and submitted the results to the Children’s Bureau in lieu of a more traditional review conducted in a one-week time frame. https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/cfsr_general_factsheet.pdf

are prioritized. For example, part of that plan is to enhance child welfare worker and supervisor training outcomes to ensure they are better prepared, supported and skilled to improve outcomes for children, youth and families. The PIP will inform the Department's training improvement plan in order to pass the federal review as well as build a competent, resilient and stable workforce.

Training Frequency

DCYF and the University of Washington, School of Social Work (SSW) partner, via the Alliance, on the continued development and refinement of an integrated, comprehensive child welfare-training program, focused on the continuous improvement of services to the children and families served by DCYF. As provided in the Master Agreement, DCYF and Alliance coordinate training efforts to provide an integrated and timely training system. DCYF and the Alliance meet annually to define the specific frequency of courses on a quarterly basis for publication in the training portion of the Annual Plan and service Report (APSR). Frequency is based on Department need and for RCT and SCT and anticipated number of new hires. DCYF and the Alliance will meet in April 2020 to begin developing the APSR for the next fiscal year. Additional courses can be added at the request of DCYF.

The Alliance provides quarterly reports on attendance of every training to DCYF both at the state level and the regional level to analyze completion numbers and modify the annual training plan schedule if increase of classes is warranted based on need and current hiring. Regional Core Training is provided at the local level twice per month west of the mountains and once per month East of the mountains. New hires start in RCT on the first day or first week of hire. RCT is scheduled on these dates as DCYF new hires start on the 1st and 16th per HR and so there is no delay in immediately starting in core foundational training.

Evidence-Informed Curriculum for Child Welfare Supervisors and Workers

Evidence-informed training methods are practices grounded in and supported by research demonstrating effectiveness.⁴ Adult learners are driven by internal motivation and they need to have a willingness to learn new concepts for learning to be effective.⁵ In addition to adult learners presenting as motivated and oriented to learn, learning experiences for them need to be self-directed, experiential, relevant and problem-centered in order to capture individual learning differences. Adult learners need to understand *why* they do what they do and then focus on *how* to do it using practical application, feedback and coaching around skills⁶. The Alliance has adopted a specific instructional model from which to build a training system. This model takes into account the stages of learning most apt to ensure transfer of specific skills and knowledge by:

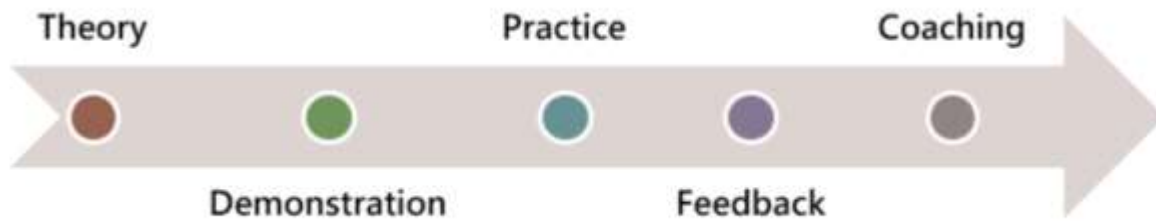
- Briefly presenting overarching and foundational theory – the *why*
- Demonstrating concepts or skills and providing opportunities for practice and feedback – the *what*
- Targeted coaching to support further understanding and refinement of skills that are crucial to work in child welfare

⁴ Clark, 2015;

Clark, R. C. (2015). *Evidence-based training methods: a guide for training professionals* (2nd edition. ed.). Alexandria, VA: Alexandria, VA: ASTD Press.

⁵ Fink, L. D. (2003). *Creating significant learning experiences: an integrated approach to designing college courses* (1st ed. ed.). San Francisco, Calif.: San Francisco, Calif.: Jossey-Bass. P.53

⁶ Taylor, P. J., Russ-Eft, D. F., & Chan, D. W. (2005). A meta-analytic review of behavior modeling training. *J Appl Psychol*, 90(4), 692-709.



Curriculum development and delivery should support and align with adult learning principles and strategies. The Partners for our Children (POC) evaluation team helps to gather information and research from other child welfare jurisdictions and leverages this knowledge into Alliance courses and coaching. Through UW School of Social Work faculty consultation, the evaluation team supports professional development of Alliance coaches in evidence-informed instructional skills (as examples, simulations for child and adult interviewing, adaptation of Debriefing with Good Judgement⁷ for use in child welfare supervision, refinement of the Alliance coaching model using Kohl's experiential learning model).⁸

Specialized Training

Training alone does not result in transfer of learning. Coaching is required for consolidating learning and implementing new skills.⁹ Thus, transfer of learning and skill development improves by increasing the use of coaching overall, to provide support for the importance of coaching beyond the training environment of RCT. In partnership with the Alliance, DCYF is committed to building a safe, authentic culture of learning where professional development is a priority, training and coaching can thrive and sufficient support exists for the DCYF workforce. Coaching helps create an environment that encourages staff to self-evaluate their level of skill, try new skills or enhance existing skills and techniques, while also feeling safe enough to be vulnerable and receive direct feedback on specific skills during the coaching process. Currently, upon completion of RCT, with the support of their Alliance coach and supervisor, workers develop a post-RCT Training Plan. In addition, the Alliance currently offers coaching as stand-alone topics for experienced line staff, supervisors and Area Administrators. The expansion of coaching for the workforce would include a multi-modality approach where classroom sessions followed up by an individualized coaching session to build on the skill development introduced in the classroom. This would be supported through a parallel process integrating the learning from the classroom training to support learner-driven coaching by an Alliance coach and a supervisor. Incorporating coaching into the training plan would further support ongoing skill development following completion of foundational trainings. Workers and supervisors alike would engage in coaching in the field as needs are identified to support transfer of learning and skill development

In partnership with the Alliance, regional staff, supervisors and Area Administrators would be well educated about the Alliance Coaching Model and the differences between training and coaching:

- **Training** – teaching a particular concept, skill or behavior^[1]

⁷ Rudolph, J., Simon, R., Dufresne, R., & Raemer, D. (2006). There's no such thing as "nonjudgmental" debriefing: A theory and method for debriefing with good judgment. *Simulation in Healthcare*: 1(1), 49-55.

⁸ Kolb, D.A. (2014). *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development*, Second Edition. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson Education, LTD.

⁹ Joyce & Showers, 2002; Health and Social Care Board, 2014.

^[1] <https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/training>

- **Coaching** – learner-driven, ongoing staff development model used to build skills around application of concepts, skills or behaviors^[2]

Trauma-Informed and Reflective Supervision

DCYF staff are afforded trainings and professional development using trauma-informed principles, including trauma awareness, safety and trust, collaborative practices and strength-based skill development. The experiences of children and families served may also improve when individual staff wellness and culture are improved. In fact, supporting staff wellness is part of the training plan improvement efforts of DCYF. First, staff wellness is prioritized, modeled and encouraged. A learning environment will be created that supports ongoing training on the impacts of trauma at work and the importance of self-care. Supervisors will provide trauma-informed supervision, which requires recognition of the staff’s trauma experiences and a normalization of the common impacts of doing trauma work.

Trauma-informed reflective supervision provides opportunities for the Supervisor-Supervisee relationship to support resiliency and stress management. A resilient workforce is one empowered to make critical decisions, advocate for their own needs – as well as those of the children and families they serve – and is rooted in self-efficacy.

The Alliance will work in collaboration with DCYF to further define the tenets of trauma-informed reflective supervision (TIRS) in our state child welfare system. Using existing models of reflective supervision¹⁰ will support the Alliance in training to specific behaviors and actions, and in evaluating the effectiveness of the training. It will also support DCYF in developing tools and checklists that can be part of a culture change effort – helping to make behavior change “stick” when it moves from the classroom to the work setting.

Additionally, the partnership between the Alliance and DCYF will support integrated content and opportunities for reflection on self-care and stress management into every curriculum in the context of the topic of instruction. The Alliance will integrate training on the TIRS practices into SCT, including Debriefing with Good Judgment,¹¹ a reflective supervision approach that the Alliance began training on last year. This ensures that each day of training touches on skills or principles of the TIRS model and to the ‘staff development and accountability’ orientation. The Alliance will integrate simulation related to TIRS into SCT. This supports supervisors to practice their skills in an environment that mimics some of the emotional and time constraints of the work environment. Simulation includes feedback, reflection and opportunities to try again - which are critical parts of developing a complex skill. Training experiences for supervisors should overtly employ a parallel process. They will integrate the ‘staff development and accountability’ framework and use skills in the TIRS model within the training. One hallmark of a trauma-informed workplace is that the impact and presence of trauma is considered and accounted for in every context and supervisory (and workforce) trainings must align with this principle.

^[2]Coaching is a process by which the coach creates structured, focused interaction with learners and uses appropriate strategies, tools and techniques to promote desirable and sustainable change for the benefit of the learner, making a positive impact on the organization.

¹⁰ Shea & Goldberg. (2016)

Shea, Sarah E.; Goldberg, Sheryl. (2016)

(Training in Reflective Supervision: Building Relationships between Supervisors and Infant Mental Health Specialists. *ZERO TO THREE*, v37 n2 p54-62

¹¹ Rudolph, J., Simon, R., Dufresne, R., & Raemer, D. (2006)

Finally, the Alliance will partner with DCYF Peer-Support Teams to increase education to the workforce about the Peer-Support Program, providing their resources and materials in all training centers and encouraging utilization of these services through activities in training. Reducing the stigma associated with workers who experience stress and secondary trauma will support a healthy workforce. The Alliance will support the acknowledgement that child welfare work is hard and it is typical to feel stress associated with the work.

Recommended Improvements to Child Welfare Trainings

Public child welfare agencies across the country are challenged in hiring and retaining qualified staff to provide vital services. Staff retention has been directly correlated to learning through training, coaching and supportive supervision.^{12 13} Training advances practice improvements through supervisor and child welfare worker knowledge and skill.

An effective training system relies on all parts of the system to support a learning culture. “Effective training systems should serve as a strategic management tool integrated into the fabric of the child welfare agency and service delivery system...The training system can partner with the executive leadership team to promote an environment that supports continuous learning, practice improvements, innovation and professional development...”¹⁴

Leadership that values continuous quality improvement must embrace a learning culture. Creating and maintaining a learning culture benefits the child welfare agency by contributing to staff retention in the following ways:

- Staff are valued for their knowledge and skill acquisition.
- Staff are valued and treated as professionals.
- Staff feel competent and confident in their practice.
- Staff gain a sense of accomplishment by improving their everyday child welfare practice.
- Staff feel welcome to ask questions and seek support.
- Succession and promotional opportunities are achievable through professional development.
- Staff adapt to new experiences and workplace changes.

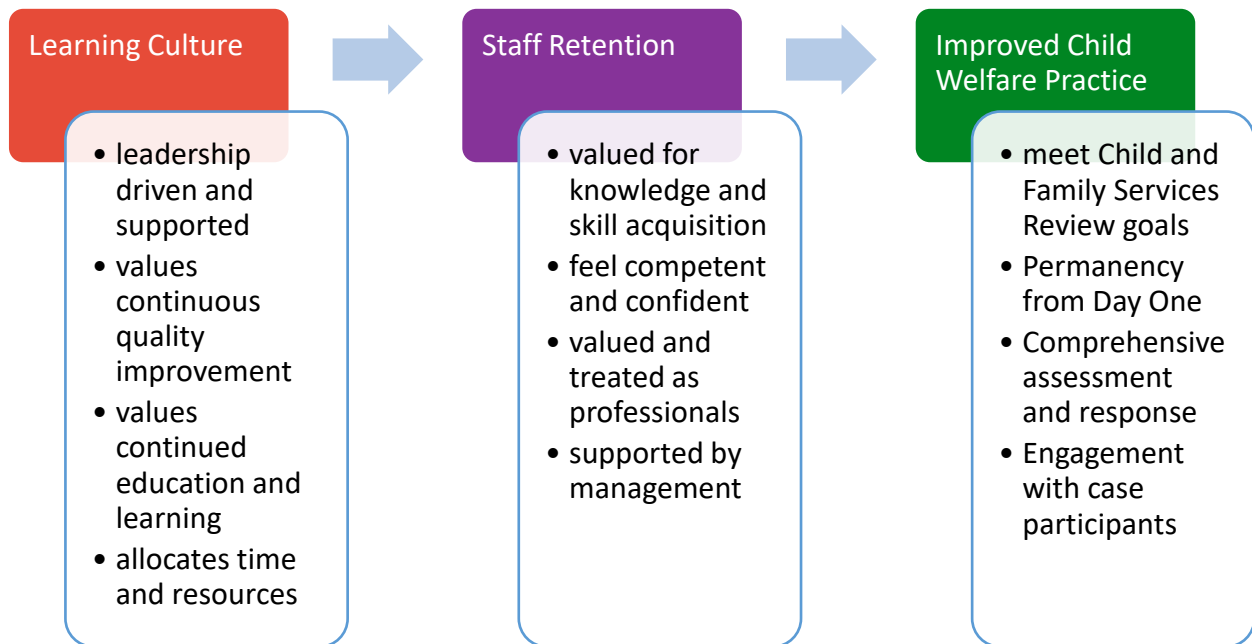
Another suggested step in creating a learning culture includes expanding mandatory training and development plans for all employees to include the frequency and timing of training requirements for staff, as well as training requirements beyond the first two years of employment. Within the next six months, a workgroup of DCYF and Alliance identified staff will update the training topics and schedule. Once that list is developed, it will be published in the DCYF Operations Manual and will be available to staff on the DCYF intranet. The training will be rolled out to staff in regional quarterly policy rollout meetings.

Creating and supporting a learning culture is part of changing agency culture to promote professional development, improve child welfare outcomes and fulfill the agency mission.

¹²Curry, D., McCarragher, T., & Dellmann-Jenkins, M. (2005). Training, transfer, and turnover: Exploring the relationship among transfer of learning factors and staff retention in child welfare. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 27(8), 931-948; and

¹³ Clark, S. J., Smith, R. J., & Uota, K. (2013). Professional development opportunities as retention incentives in child welfare. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 35(10), 1687-1697.

¹⁴ Creating an Effective Child Welfare Training System. (National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement. Retrieved 11/5/2019.) <http://muskie.usm.maine.edu/helpkids/rcpdfs/trainingfact.pdf>



Supporting staff wellness includes ensuring that supervisors are trauma-informed and using such principles in their practice. Supervision and debriefing with staff requires collaboration in decision making and feedback, choice in undertaking their work and how they are invited to provided that feedback and choice.

Expansion of the use of simulations for training of workforce beyond core training (RCT) will improve skill development in engagement, team decision making and response to critical incidents. Currently the Alliance provides simulation training on child/adult interviewing skill and court testimony in RCT. The Alliance and DCYF are working on the development and implementation of simulations after completion of RCT that will cover a variety of critical topics providing workforce and supervisor development in engagement, assessment and planning.

Current and Proposed Simulation and Coaching Learning Activities in Regional Core Training

	Current	Proposed Additions
Child Interview Simulation	X	
Adult Interview Simulation	X	
Testimony Simulation	X	
Utilization of Debriefing With Good Judgement	X	
Individual Wellness	X	
Partnership with Peer Support Team		X
Initial Case Assignment 1:1/Small-Group Skill-Building Session	X	
Initial Case Assignment/Supervisor Case Review Coaching Utilizing Enhanced Supervision of Coach/Supervisor		X

Program-Specific Practice and Documentation	X	
Opportunities for Reflective Learning	X	
Team Based Learning		X
Opportunities for Trauma-Informed Reflective Supervision with Assigned Supervisor		X
Post-RCT Training Plan	X	
Post-RCT Training Plan with Learner-Driven Coaching Needs Identified		X

Current and Proposed Learning Activities in Supervisor Core Training

	Current	Proposed Additions
How to Support New Workers/Training & Professional Development	X	
Data and Documentation	X	
Individual Wellness	X	
Partnership with Peer Support Team		X
Supporting Individual Wellness of Supervisees		X
Initial Case Assignment/Supervisor Case Review Coaching Utilizing Enhanced Supervision of Coach/Supervisor (participation when new workers are in RCT)		X
Trauma-Informed/Reflective Supervision		X
Ability to Utilize Debriefing With Good Judgement		X
Supervisory Case Review Simulation		X
Learner-Driven Coaching	X	
Team Based Learning		X

The use of new technology – such as virtual reality - in professional development, will improve the transfer of learning and skill development. In addition, access to micro-eLearnings with topics designed to provide just-in-time learning, would allow the workforce to access process and resources for uncommon situations, skills used infrequently and new learning in general.

Virtual Reality or Augmented Reality (VR/AR) Training Simulations can offer a unique learning opportunity to try out complex situations, assess for common safety threats and practice difficult conversations in a safe environment. The benefits of VR/AR Training Simulations include little to no-risk because:

- Training occurs in a safe and controlled environment
- Realistic situations and scenarios can be accessed remotely reducing costs and time associated with travel to a training location
- Improves retention and recall
- Provides opportunities for learners to simplify complex problems or situations and tackle these experiences in bite-size pieces

- Most learners find simulations innovative and enjoyable¹⁵

In Partnership with DCYF Headquarters and Technology Services, the Alliance will provide robust training resources available through the Intranet and easily accessible by the workforce. Resources will include job aids, step-by-step guides (e.g. completing pieces of work in FamLink) and tools to support working with children and families (e.g. child development resources).

POC provides leadership for the evaluation of workforce professional development through a variety of evaluation activities:

- **Conducting trainee surveys** that assess satisfaction, trainee perceptions about knowledge and skills gained in the course or coaching session and the applicability of the learning to their assigned work positions. These data are summarized in quarterly reports to DCYF and discussed at Alliance quarterly Regional Advisory meetings. They are also aggregated, used to monitor implementation of training and to inform annual planning through the APSR (Annual Progress and Services Report).
- **Gathering and analyzing data through training observation.** Training observation supports various aspects of continuous quality improvement. Through observation, the evaluation team can 1) assess the acquisition of knowledge and skills of trainees 2) assess fidelity of the delivery of curriculum 3) assess trainer and coach facilitation skills 4) provide feedback on curriculum design, pacing and flow. In addition, for RCT, subject matter experts from DCYF have joined in observing sessions to provide feedback on training content with respect to DCYF policy and practice.
- **Presenting and discussing findings** at various workgroups and the statewide Evaluation Committee meetings to inform planning and quality improvement.

POC is exploring the use of technology to capture data regarding practice knowledge and skills. Data collection through eLearnings, simulation recordings, responses to video-based or written vignettes and written work samples within a FamLink training environment will be considered. In some instances, coaches will complete assessments of skills demonstrated by trainees. Other options could include observation of interactions with children and families in the field or targeted case reviews.

Conclusion

DCYF and their training partners the Alliance for Child Welfare Excellence and Partners for our Children, will work to improve the learning experience for professional staff. These improvements will leave DCYF workforce members better prepared to serve the child welfare population and identify strategies for improved learning using principles of adult learning theory, transfer of learning in simulation and coaching and working toward becoming a trauma-informed organization.

¹⁵ <https://www.vrs.org.uk/virtual-reality-education/advantages.html>