

Training **MATTERS**



A PUBLICATION OF THE NC DSS CHILDREN'S SERVICES STATEWIDE TRAINING PARTNERSHIP

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Training Matters is produced by the North Carolina Division of Social Services Children's Services Statewide Training Partnership, an organization dedicated to developing and delivering competency-based, job-relevant, accessible child welfare training. Partners include:

- N.C. Division of Social Services
- N.C. Assoc. of Directors of County Depts. of Social Services
- BIABH Study Center at Appalachian State University
- Children and Family Services Association-NC
- ECU School of Social Work
- Independent Living Resources, Inc.
- N.C. State University Social Work Program
- N.C. A & T State University Social Work Program
- Resources for Change, Inc.
- UNC-Chapel Hill School of Social Work (Jordan Institute for Families)
- UNC-Chapel Hill School of Medicine
- UNC-Charlotte Dept. of Sociology/Anthropology/Social Work
- UNC-Greensboro Department of Social Work

We Want To Hear from You!

If you have questions or would like to comment about something that appears in *Training Matters*, please contact us. Address your comments to:

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Welcome to *Training Matters*

We are pleased to bring you the first issue of *Training Matters*, the newsletter of the N.C. Division of Social Services Children's Services Statewide Training Partnership. A supplement to the spring and fall child welfare training calendars you receive at your agency, each issue of *Training Matters* will provide you

with updates on new curricula, highlight special offerings, and give you the information you need to select and get the most out of the professional development opportunities offered by the Division. If there are particular topics or training events you would like to see addressed, please let us know!

Child Welfare: How Training Fits with Practice

North Carolina's child welfare system exists to support families and protect children. To fulfill this mission, county departments of social services require social workers who have mastered the skills necessary to help and serve families.

However, many of our child welfare workers lack the professional social work education necessary to do their jobs well—a recent work force study found that 64 percent do not have a BSW or MSW degree. At the same time, counties are faced with a growing number of abused and neglected children. Add to this the annual turnover rate of 25 percent for child welfare workers that exists in some communities, and you begin to get the picture: County departments of social services are stretched.

Counties and the families they serve urgently need prepared, qualified child welfare social workers.

Understanding this need, the North Carolina legislature has in recent years taken steps to support the development of a statewide child welfare training system. This system, which is being built by the N.C. Division of Social Services and its partners, is designed to ensure that county child welfare agencies have access to training that is competency-based, job-relevant, accessible, affordable, consistent, timely, and thorough.

Competency-Based Training

North Carolina's new child welfare training system is competency-based. This means that every aspect of training is founded on the knowledge and skills child welfare supervisors and workers need to do their jobs. This list drives the training

Counties and the families they serve urgently need expert child welfare social workers.

How Training Fits With Practice from page 1

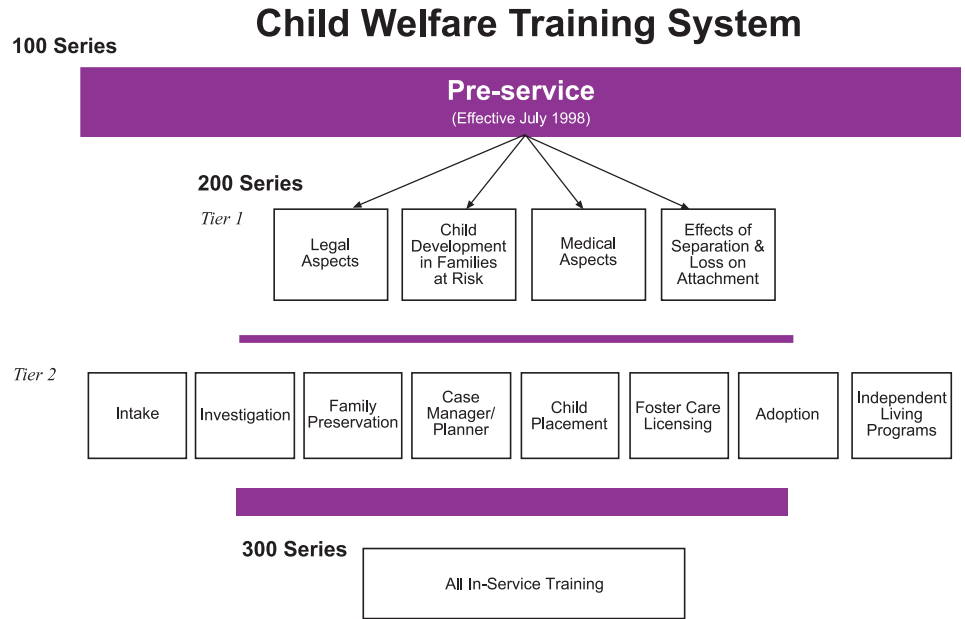
system. It is used to assess training needs and guide the development of training courses. Using competencies as a touchstone helps ensure that everything included in training is essential to job performance.

The Training Courses

North Carolina's child welfare training system is founded on the notion that developing competencies in child welfare is an ongoing process. Accordingly, a continuum of training has been devised to ensure that all public child welfare staff continue to develop the skills and knowledge they need (see diagram).

The foundation and common denominator of the child welfare training system is its preservice curriculum, *Child Welfare in North Carolina*. Here new social workers engage in 12 days of intensive learning, covering the knowledge and beginning to develop skills that all social workers need, whether they work in adoption, foster care, or child protective services.

After the preservice, the training offered gradually becomes more specialized. In the two-tiered 200 series, workers concentrate on building skills that correspond closely to specific areas of practice or job positions. For information regarding training requirements for your position, refer to the booklet, *Training Requirements for Children's Services* (January 2000).



Once they have met the minimum training requirements, experienced workers and supervisors focus on the advanced topics offered in the 300 series.

Training and Mastery

When it comes right down to it, counties want expert child welfare social workers. While the Division will continually strive to improve what it offers, the truth is that even the best training cannot produce master social workers.

Although adequate training is essential to the performance of any organization, there are limits on what it can do. Training is a powerful and effective way of introducing adult learners to information or skills and bringing them to the level of conscious competence. In this stage of skill development, a worker is aware of a skill and, when he or she con-

centrates, is able to apply it effectively on the job.

However, most organizations need more. They require their employees to have mastered the skills needed to do their jobs to the point where they perform them expertly and without difficulty. This can happen only over time, in the "real" world of practice with families and under the guidance of skilled peers and supervisors.

If trainers, supervisors, and social workers keep this fact in mind, everyone will benefit. Trainers will avoid overpromising and have realistic demands of trainees. Supervisors' and social workers' expectations will also be more realistic: They will understand that, although training can put workers on the road to performance excellence, only supervisors can see them through to their journey's end. ♦

North Carolina's Online Training Resource

To learn about training opportunities or find out when a specific training will be offered, go to <http://childrensservices.dhhs.state.nc.us/staff.htm>