

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. Association of County Directors 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 Department of Sociology/Social Work
- 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, and Social Work
- UNC-Greensboro Dept. 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 Rebecca Brigham, Program Administrator, Children's Services Staff Development, N.C. Division of Social Services, 2412 Mail Service Center, 325 N. Salisbury Street, Suite 735, Raleigh, NC 27699-2412, State Courier: 56-20-25, E-mail: Rebecca.Brigham@ncmail.net, Tel: 919/733-7672.

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Training Matters is produced by John McMahon, Jordan Institute for Families, UNC-CH School of Social Work.

The 200 Series: Tools to Help You Cultivate Your Practice

In August 1997 North Carolina began developing a comprehensive training system for the state's adoption, foster care, and child protective services social workers. Today, less than three years later, there are more than 40 courses available for these professionals.

Almost half of the courses in North Carolina's child welfare training system are designed to meet the learning needs of new workers or workers entering a new practice area. These courses exist to give workers the tools (information and basic skills) they need to cultivate their practice with families.

The 200 Series

The majority of courses for new workers fall into the category known as the **200 series**. Built to carry on the work begun by supervisors and the preservice training, *Child Welfare in North Carolina*, the 200 series is divided into two "tiers" (see sidebar). Courses in both these tiers must be completed within one year of finishing the preservice training.

Courses in **Tier I** provide participants with an in-depth treatment of specific topic areas all child welfare workers should know about, such as child development. If you are a new child welfare worker, you must attend all four Tier I courses.

Tier II courses provide infor-

mation and opportunities to learn skills relevant to specific jobs. Thus, as a new child welfare worker you should attend the Tier II courses that address the areas in which you practice. For example, if you are new to investigations you should attend *Investigative Assessment in Child Welfare Services*. If your new position involves more than one area of practice, meet with your supervisor to prioritize attendance at Tier II events based upon your most pressing needs.

Like all the courses in the child welfare training system, the 200

THE 200 SERIES

Tier I: Foundation knowledge and skills

- Child Development in Families at Risk
- Effects of Separation & Loss on Attachment
- Legal Aspects of Child Welfare in NC
- Medical Aspects of Child Abuse and Neglect for Non-Medical Professionals

Tier II: Specialized foundation knowledge and skills

- Intake in Child Welfare Services
- Investigative Assessment in Child Welfare
- Family-Centered Practice in Family Preservation Programs
- Case Planning and Management in Child Welfare Services
- Placement in Child Welfare Services
- Foster Family Home Licensing in Child Welfare Services
- Adoptions in Child Welfare Services
- Adolescent Independent Living 101

The 200 Series

from page 1

series aims to give workers the foundation skills and information they need to do their jobs. When the training is over, it is up to participants to use these tools back in their home agencies to improve their practice.

Evaluating Effectiveness

While the Division of Social Services and its partners have been building a training system they have also been developing a means of evaluating it. Leading the efforts in this area are Dr. Fasih Ahmed, of N.C. A & T University, and Dr. Elizabeth Lindsey, of the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Working closely with other members of the statewide training partnership, Ahmed and Lindsey have developed a comprehensive evaluation form called the Participant Satisfaction Form, or PSF. This evaluation collects information from each participant so that those in charge of managing and refining the training system know what's working and what's not.

It is hoped that down the road data from PSFs can be linked with information from North Carolina's Children's Services Statewide Training Database to make it possible to know and meet the needs of individual workers, identify areas for improvement in various curricula, evaluate trainer performance, and much more.

The evaluation system is still being developed. *Training Matters* will provide you with reports as the evaluation system matures and analyses of the training system's effectiveness are completed.

Participant Reactions

What do participants think of the 200 series so far? Are these courses giving workers a foundation on which to develop their practice?

Based on an examination of a random stack of PSFs, the answer to these questions seems to be "yes." Generally speaking, those attending 200 series courses are pleased with the quality of training they receive. For example, social workers recently attending *Child Placement* praised this curriculum for the balance it achieved between discussion and technique. One participant liked the fact that the curriculum encouraged "responsible and compassionate social work practice." Another remarked that she "learned valuable information that will help me with my job."

Of course, there have been criticisms. Participants at a recent offering of *Foster Family Home Licensing* expressed frustration with the length of the curriculum—they felt there was simply too much information presented in the two-day training, and suggested that it be longer. They also wanted *all* the handouts to be included in the participant manuals.

Participants Help Improve the 200 Series

Comments made on the PSF forms are taken seriously. Participants' suggestions, as well as trainer feedback, curriculum design principles, and changes in policy, law, and standards are considered when the Division and its partners make revisions. For example, because so many participants felt *Foster Family Home Licensing* needed to be

QUESTIONS?

If you have questions about training requirements for your position, consult your agency's summer 2000 training calendar (pages 6 and 7) or contact Rebecca Brigham or Connie Polk (t: 919/733-7672; Rebecca.Brigham@ncmail.net; Connie.Polk@ncmail.net).

longer, the Jordan Institute for Families and the Division changed the curriculum. Beginning in July 2000, *Licensing* will be 3 days long.

Remaining Critical Is Key

Because they are committed to continuous improvement, those developing North Carolina's child welfare training system will continue to invite and value both praise and criticism from those who attend training.

For their part, training participants must continue to provide specific feedback on the training they receive. Participants must demand excellent courses and instructors, yet to get the most out of training social workers must also be critical of themselves as learners. To derive full benefit from every course, they must challenge themselves to step out of their "comfort zones" and into new areas, or to practice in the classroom skills they feel they have already mastered.

With direction from learners with high standards for themselves *and* the training they receive, North Carolina is sure to develop the kind of child welfare training system its families and children need.