

# Training **MATTERS**



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

Volume 2, Number 2 • May 2001

*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 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 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](mailto:Rebecca.Brigham@ncmail.net), Tel: 919/733-7672.

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*Training Matters* is written and designed by John McMahon, Jordan Institute for Families, UNC-CH School of Social Work.

## **New Distribution Strategy for Child Welfare Training Schedule**

By now you have heard: this year, North Carolina expects a budget shortfall of approximately \$791 million.

The North Carolina Division of Social Services has taken a number of steps to help our state address this situation. Among these are restrictions on nonessential travel and the elimination of non-essential publications.

The publication of the Division's summer/fall child welfare training schedule falls into this latter category. To make sure that the word gets out about training, the NCDSS Children's Services Statewide Training Partnership has devised a new distribution scheme for the training schedule. In May a *single* printed

copy of the training schedule will be mailed out to the directors of county departments of social services. At the same time, the schedule will be made available on the Division's web site at <http://childrensservices.dhhs.state.nc.us/staffdevelopment/index.htm>.

Child welfare supervisors and social workers will be able to access the full training schedule and policies related to training from this web site, where they will have the option of browsing the calendar on-line and downloading it for further reference or printing.

If you have questions about this new method of disseminating the training schedule, please contact Connie Polk (919/733-7672; [connie.polk@ncmail.net](mailto:connie.polk@ncmail.net)).

### **Download or Browse the New Training Calendar On-Line**



The new web version of the schedule will enable you to:

- Browse the schedule on-line
- Download for printing or future reference
- Link directly to the registration form

Go to <http://childrensservices.dhhs.state.nc.us/staffdevelopment/index.htm>

# Supervisors to Begin Receiving Reports on New Worker Conduct at Preservice Training

Supervisors will soon have a new way of learning about the strengths of their new workers, as well as the areas in which they need to improve.

The vehicle for this information will be a new process of evaluating those who attend North Carolina's mandatory pre-service training, *Child Welfare in North Carolina*. At the heart of this process is an assessment called the "Preservice Training Participant Feedback Form," which will make its debut in classrooms—and on supervisors' desks—in June 2001. After an initial pilot period, this evaluation process will be fully implemented some time in the fall of this year.

## Supervisors Request Feedback

Between October 1999 and March 2000 the Training Partnership's Elizabeth Lindsey conducted a series of focus groups with North Carolina child welfare supervisors to find out what they thought about Preservice. Out of these meetings came positive feedback about the Preservice and many suggestions for making it better. One of the things suggested was that the Partnership create a way for Preservice trainers to communicate with supervisors about what they saw as the strengths, needs, and overall conduct of new workers during training.

In response to this feedback, the Partnership's evaluation and transfer of learning committees, in collaboration with Preservice trainers, created a series of benchmarks for evaluating Preservice participants. These benchmarks will help trainers assess trainees' attentiveness in class; timeliness; the level and style of their participation in discussions and class activities; how they shared or handled criticism, objections, and challenges; and the extent to which they supported and encouraged the learning of others.

Trainers will then use specific criteria related to these benchmarks to assess the strengths and conduct of each participant during the course of training. For example, on each day of training, trainers will assess whether participants contributed to an environment conducive to learning (e.g., turned off cell phones and beepers), demonstrated respect for

**"We'll be asking supervisors to give us feedback on this process. We want to make sure they find it helpful and worthwhile."**

—Connie Polk, NCDSS

others, and seemed truly interested in learning.

## Preservice Feedback Form

Toward the end of the third week of training, trainers will fill out the one-page "Preservice Training Participant Feedback Form" for each participant. On that form they will give the participant a rating in the different benchmark areas. The form also gives trainers the option of commenting on a participant's strengths or areas that may need additional work back at the agency.

Once trainers complete the form, they will give the trainee a chance to review their comments and to perform a self-assessment using the same benchmarks the trainers used. At the conclusion of the training the trainer will give each new worker a copy of this form for his or her own records and send a copy on to the worker's supervisor.

All of this will be no surprise to participants, who will have this evaluation process—and the fact that it was requested by child welfare supervisors—explained to them on the first day of Preservice.

## Get the Most Out of the New Participant Feedback Form

This form exists to help supervisors develop their new employees. To make sure this feedback process is as constructive as possible, supervisors may want to do the following.

### Before Training

Explain the form to new workers. In addition to discussing the criteria that will be used to assess them, make it clear what the agency's expectations are for what they should learn, how they should behave while attending the Preservice, and how you will use trainer feedback.

### After Training

Meet with new employees to discuss the feedback on the form. Talk first about the strengths. Encourage the worker to come up with strategies for applying these strengths to his or her work with families. Then talk about the needs identified on the form. Together with the worker, come up with a plan for improving the worker's skills and knowledge in these areas. This plan can include focused mentoring and coaching from the supervisor and attending training.