

Training **MATTERS**



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- 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
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- 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!

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To read this or past issues online, go to <http://www.sowo.unc.edu/ferp/tm/tm_mainpage.htm>.

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Helping Workers Apply What They Learn in Training

When it comes to personnel matters, supervisors and administrators in social services agencies want one simple thing: workers who can do the job. To enhance the performance of their employees, they often send workers to training designed to cultivate the skills and knowledge workers need. So far, so good.

But no matter how good the training, no matter how engaging and talented the trainers, if the employee doesn't apply what she learned during the training when she returns to the agency, then the agency has effectively lost any

benefit it might have derived from the training.

Fortunately, it doesn't have to be this way. According to Mary Urzi, Director of Family Support Services at Wake County Human Services and an expert on transfer of learning, there are specific things supervisors and administrators can do to capitalize on their investment in training.

The following are her suggestions for helping workers apply what they learn in the classroom

continued ➔



**"To truly benefit from training, we must support transfer of learning."
—Mary Urzi**

Supervisor Interventions to Enhance Transfer of Learning

Before Training

1. Conduct pre-training conference with trainee
2. Discuss workshop expectations with supervisee
3. Begin to plan for action plan
4. Convey training as a priority

During

1. Insure there are no distractions (cover for trainee, if necessary)
2. Convey training is a priority
3. Discuss training and application of what she has learned with worker between sessions, if multiple-day training
4. Attend training

After

1. Meet with supervisee within a week to review key points in training and action plan
2. Provide worker opportunity to try out new skills
3. Provide reinforcement for use of new skills
4. Reduce barriers to application of new skills

Source: Curry, D. H., Caplan, P., & Knuppel, J. (1994). Transfer of training and adult learning (TOTAL). *Journal of Continuing Social Work Education*, 6(1), 8-14.

Register for Training On-line!

Registering for child welfare training is easier than ever, thanks to the newly developed web site for the North Carolina Statewide Training System (NCSTS). This site allows individuals to register for upcoming training events directly on-line. After they register, individuals receive a registration confirmation via U.S. mail.

Like the biannual training calendar, this site also provides a description of the training objectives and target audience for each curriculum offered, as well as detailed information about specific training events.

The NCSTS is sponsored by the NC Division of Social Services and developed by the

Jordan Institute for Families at the UNC-Chapel Hill School of Social Work. The Division and the Jordan Institute are excited about this new means of facilitating the registration process and conserving paper.

We hope you'll visit our web site soon! The address is <http://sswnt5.sowo.unc.edu/ncsts/pub/index.htm>



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to their work with families.

Tips for Administrators

See training as a partnership. Training alone cannot help workers integrate learning well enough to apply it competently on the job. Nor can supervisors do it all—they depend on classroom trainers and training events to organize and formalize learning opportunities and sequences. The professional development of workers should be seen as a partnership between supervisors and the child welfare training system.

Proclaim your support. Perhaps the single most important thing agency directors and administrators can do is to give their “blessing” to training. They can do this by sending out a letter to staff once a year stating, “Training is very important to your growth and development. I personally support and encourage your participation.”

Demonstrate your support by providing the resources (time, money) necessary to send people to training. If your budget is such that you can send only ten people a year, make sure those ten re-

ally feel they have the support of the agency behind them.

Tips for Supervisors

Ask your own supervisor for support. Explain to her why you believe training is important and describe specific ways she can support you and your workers in this area.

Strive for the “three rights.” Agencies benefit the most from training if they send the right person to the right training at the right time. Urzi gives the following example: “Right now, many new workers are not getting to the 200 series until they’ve been on the job for nine months or a year. That’s not the optimal timing for the 200 series, which should really occur within the first three to six months of someone coming to child welfare.”

Clarify your expectations prior to training. In brief, individualized pre-training conferences, discuss the learning outcomes of the training and help workers make the connections between the training they’re attending, their own performance,

and the goals and mission of the program.

Emphasize the importance of “action plans.” Incorporated into much of the training offered by the Division, action plans take many forms, but generally challenge workers to think of strategies for enhancing their practice based on what they learn in the classroom.

Hold a post-training conference with the trainee. Supervisors can do this as part of regular supervisory conferences or as a special meeting where the two of you might review a service plan and discuss how the worker applied what he learned to the creation of the service plan.

Be purposeful. Be clear about why you’re sending workers to a particular training, why it’s important, and what you want them to get out of it. Communicate all of this to workers and then follow up with words and actions that encourage them to integrate what they’ve learned into their practice. Do this, and chances are you’ll be getting everything you can out of training.