

Training **MATTERS**



A PUBLICATION OF THE NC DSS FAMILY SUPPORT AND CHILD WELFARE SERVICES STATEWIDE TRAINING PARTNERSHIP

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Training Matters is produced by the North Carolina Division of Social Services Family Support and Child Welfare 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
- Appalachian Family Innovations at Appalachian State University
- Independent Living Resources, Inc.
- N.C. Child Welfare Education Collaborative
- N.C. State University Department of 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-Greensboro Department of Social Work

We Want To Hear from You!

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Visit Our Website

Go to <www.trainingmatters-nc.org>.

This issue of *Training Matters* was produced by John McMahon of the UNC-Chapel Hill School of Social Work.

References for this issue can be found at <www.trainingmatters-nc.org>

Child Welfare Training: NC Has Come a Long Way

In 1995, child welfare agencies in North Carolina were under a lot of pressure. Through state and federal law, they had a mandate to ensure the children in every community were safe and well cared for.

This is a desperately important job. To do it well agencies need well-trained professionals who are deeply committed to families.

Like child welfare agencies in many parts of the country, our child welfare agencies had little difficulty finding committed individuals, but they sometimes struggled when it came to attracting and retaining people with the knowledge and skills needed for child welfare work. Indeed, most child welfare workers had no formal social work education.

In 1995 agencies also struggled with worker turnover, which meant counties had to continually recruit and train employees.

Fast forward to 2005. North Carolina's child welfare agencies face the same pressures they did in 1995. They still have legal mandates, and turnover rates and the need to train new workers remain high. In fact the pressure for training is greater today, because in 1997 the NC Legislature, recognizing the importance of adequately trained child welfare workers and supervisors, passed a law requiring pre-service and ongoing training for all child welfare professionals.

Today, however, agencies have an advantage that they didn't have in 1995. Today they have access to an extensive infrastructure designed to support them in their efforts to train child welfare workers. *continued* →

Our training system is one of the best in the nation.

NC's Child Welfare Training System: Key Statistics				
	1998	2000	2002	2004
Curricula offered	24	43	50	49
Training events offered	170	285	252*	388
Number of the above training events offered at the regional training centers	58	213	188*	210
Training days delivered	717	1,162	1,127*	1,457
Offerings of the training <i>Child Welfare in NC</i> (Pre-Service)	20	39	41	42
Registrants from County DSS's	5,959	6,419	4,657*	9,224

*Reduction due to inclement weather and budget cuts

Training: NC Has Come a Long Way

from p. 1

Building a Training System

In the ten years since 1995 the NC Division of Social Services and its partners have made North Carolina's child welfare training system one of the best in the nation. County child welfare agencies now have access to the following:

A Continuum of Training. The Division and its partners have developed a continuum of more than 50 classroom-based child welfare training courses. Each course focuses on developing job-relevant knowledge and skills. A range of courses has been created to meet the needs of all workers and supervisors, even those with years of experience. Every course offered through the training system is thoroughly evaluated.

Regional Training Centers. To make training more accessible and affordable, the Division established training centers in Asheville, Charlotte, Fayetteville, Greensboro, and Kinston. These regional centers help reduce agency travel costs and time away from the office for child welfare staff.

Timely, Specialized Training. The Division responds in a timely way when urgent training needs arise. For example, from 2003 to 2005 the Division and its partners created a series of courses to help counties prepare for and implement North Carolina's child welfare reform effort, the Multiple Response System (MRS). Another example of the Division's responsiveness is the training it has recently developed about family-centered practice with families involved with methamphetamine and family violence.

To learn more about North Carolina's child welfare training system, visit the Division's child welfare training web page <www.dhhs.state.nc.us/dss/training/childwelfare.htm>. There you can access course catalogues and links that enable you to register for training.

Looking Ahead

Though the Division and its training partners have achieved a great deal, they are not sitting on their laurels. Even before the recent spike in the price of gasoline, the Division and its partners were exploring new ways to use technology to enhance training.

One example of this is *Child Development in Families at Risk*. This two-day course, which is required for all new child welfare workers, has been converted into a "blended" learning experience in which participants attend a half-day in the classroom and then take the rest of the course online.

This course uses interactive presentations complete with audio, streaming video, knowledge assessments, and online discussions. The Jordan Institute for Families at the UNC-Chapel Hill School of Social Work, which developed the original classroom version of this course, has created, piloted, and continues to refine this online course.

The online version of *Child Development* will be offered several times this spring; the box below lists training dates and describes some of the benefits of online learning.

Although the Division and its partners are in the early stages of online child welfare training, feedback from participants and focus groups suggest that this approach holds a great deal of promise. In the near future you can expect to see the Division converting other classroom-based courses into blended online learning experiences, and using e-learning in its various forms to make training for child welfare professionals more effective, accessible, and affordable for county agencies.

Online Child Welfare Courses

Advantages

- Self-Directed, Convenient, and Flexible Learning. Learn at your own pace. Focus on what you need, skipping what you know or repeating sections if you wish. You are more in control of where, when, and how you learn. You make your own schedule for completing course requirements.
- Individualized Attention. You can e-mail the instructor directly with questions, enhancing your learning.
- Cost Savings. *Training Magazine* estimates organizations save 50–70% when they shift from classroom-based training to online learning. Workers improve productivity and use their time more efficiently, and agencies save on travel costs.

Offerings of *Child Development in Families at Risk**

To register for one of the following sessions, go to:
<www.ncswtrain.org>

- March 27, 2006 (classroom portion: Charlotte).
Registration opens: 1/16/06. Reg. closes: 3/06/06
- April 3, 2006 (classroom portion: Greensboro).
Registration opens: 1/23/06. Reg. closes: 3/13/06
- May 23, 2006 (classroom portion: Asheville).
Registration opens: 3/14/06. Reg. closes: 5/02/06

*Note: the traditional classroom version of this course continues to be available. See the NCDSS training calendar for class times.