

Training **MATTERS**



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

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- NC Division of Social Services
- NC Association of County Directors of Social Services
- Appalachian Family Innovations at Appalachian State University
- Independent Living Resources, Inc.
- NC Child Welfare Education Collaborative
- NC State University Department of Social Work
- NC 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!

If you have questions or would like to comment about something that appears in *Training Matters*, please contact Teresa Turner, Program Administrator, Family Support and Child Welfare Services Staff Development, NC 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: Teresa.Turner@ncmail.net, Tel: 919/733-7672.

Visit Our Website

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

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

Support for Child and Family Team Meetings in NC

NCSU Program Offers Free Training Tailored to Your Agency's Needs

Child and family team meetings (CFTs) are one of the most valuable tools North Carolina's child welfare agencies have to help them protect children and strengthen families.

These structured, facilitated events bring family members together so that, with the support of professionals and community resources, they can create a plan that ensures child safety and meets the family's needs.

Studies of one type of CFT, family group conferencing, found this way of making decisions is preferred by families, works with families from diverse cultures, and produces plans

that meet with workers' approval (AHA, 2003).

In North Carolina, use of CFTs is not just a good idea. Since the Multiple Response System went statewide in January 2006, it is also required by child welfare policy.

To help county DSS agencies develop and sustain their capacity to use CFTs, the Division of Social Services has been working with the NC Family-Centered Meetings Project at NC State University. In addition to a substantial menu of classroom-based courses for child welfare agencies (see below), the project also **cont. p. 2**

The Family-Centered Meetings Project in 2005-06

In partnership with the NC Division of Social Services, during state fiscal year 2005-06 North Carolina's Family-Centered Meetings Project at NC State University offered 100 classroom-based training events to help child welfare workers and facilitators conduct successful CFT meetings. Here's a breakdown of the courses offered:

- "Setting the Stage for Child and Family Teams," a one-day orientation to CFTs; offered 39 times
- "Caution: Family Meeting Ahead!", a one-day training for referring social workers; offered 25 times
- "Anchors Away! How to Navigate Child and Family Teams," a four-day course for CFT facilitators; offered 18 times
- "The ABCs of Including Children in Family-Centered Meetings," a one-day advanced course; offered 14 times
- "Widening the Circle: Child and Family Teams and Safety Considerations," a two-day advanced course; offered 4 times

Through these training events the project taught 1,237 individuals from 79 of North Carolina's 100 counties.

CHILDREN

Making sure that children's voices are heard when decisions are made about their lives.

FAMILIES

Honoring the strengths, leadership, and cultures of families as pivotal to healthy communities.

TEAMS

Partnering families, community organizations, and public agencies to foster hope and success.

Support for CFT Meetings in NC from page 1

offers tailored learning activities and customized technical assistance specifically designed to meet the learning needs of North Carolina's county DSS agencies.

TALS

Through the project's Technical Assistance and Learning Support program (TALS), DSS employees involved in CFTs and people identified by DSS agencies as facilitators can request or participate in a variety of activities designed to support their classroom learning, including:

- Telephone and in-person coaching and debriefing of facilitators
- Mini-workshops focused on case examples, preparing for CFTs, practice of facilitation skills, etc.
- Two-day introductions to CFTs from the perspective of families

to prepare DSS agencies and their community partners to work together with families

The TALS program also offers activities to acquaint agencies with the benefits of CFTs and to help them develop CFT-related training plans.

As part of your training plan, TALS can offer specialized training at or near your agency. The project may also be able to hold one of its regularly scheduled courses (see list, p. 1) in your area.

TALS, like the other training and services provided by the NC Family-Centered Meetings Project, is free of charge for NC county DSS agencies.

Facilitator Forums

To support CFTs in North Carolina the project also offers an ongoing series of facilitator forums. These are

especially designed for CFT facilitators, with an emphasis on relaxed learning, sharing, and support. They are held quarterly in the Eastern, Central, and Western regions of the state and hosted by various county DSS agencies. They are usually held from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. and facilitated by two of the project's trainers.

The Next Step

To learn more about TALS, request a training, or find out when the next facilitator forum will be held in your area, contact Jenny King, TALS Coordinator (919/326-7463, jlking4@ncsu.edu). If you visit the project's website you will find additional information and an online request form. Just go to www.chass.ncsu.edu/fcmp/dss/TALS.htm.

From the Field: Practical Advice for CFT Facilitators

by Billy Poindexter

A very contentious family came to a CFT meeting. Before we even went over the paperwork they stated they wanted to videotape the meeting per their lawyer's advice. Their reason? They said they had been lied to by the agency.

Clearly, this issue had to be addressed before we could proceed with the meeting. As a facilitator I had the option to shut the meeting down. Instead, I "froze" the meeting. You do not want a family or provider to feel they are being ignored or that their stance is irrelevant.

Next, I asked the social worker and his supervisor for the agency's position on the request. The supervisor sought legal advice, but no one was available to give a clear answer.

At that point I noted that the meeting could be rescheduled so the agency could address this request. This demonstrated to the family that the CFT process wasn't

set up to be an agency steamroller and their demeanor visibly changed.

The social worker and his supervisor then stated that it was possible that the family had been given conflicting responses, since there were at least four workers at the home at different times. Clarifying this misunderstanding led to a civil discussion.

This went on for almost an hour (informal CFT), with the family being much more open, since it saw the agency was engaged and open to the family's suggestions. I stayed quiet except to ask for clarification a couple of times to ensure all parties understood one another.

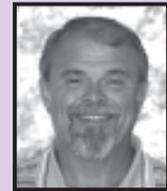
At the end I explained to the family that they had just experienced a CFT. I noted that CFTs seek to support families and that in a meeting the family has the right to be a part of the discussion.

As we left the room the family was talking to the social worker, which was a big change from before, when they were shutting him out and

complicating the case.

Implications for Facilitators

1. Don't panic if someone throws you a curve ball. Take a moment to consider the most respectful way to proceed.
2. There are times the agenda needs to go on hold. Time spent demonstrating family-centered values is more valuable than simply telling families "we will be family-centered."
3. Allow space for discussion of the family's perceptions. If necessary, reframe the family's concern, but do not assume you must "help" or justify worker/agency actions.
4. Back off during discussion but seek clarification as needed.
5. All of this gives credibility to you as a neutral facilitator and to the CFT process as a whole.



Billy Poindexter is a CFT facilitator with Catawba County DSS and a trainer for the NC Family-Centered Meetings Project