



NC DSS FAMILY SUPPORT AND CHILD WELFARE SERVICES

**STATEWIDE TRAINING
PARTNERSHIP**

*A Strategic Plan
for the Next Five Years
2005 – 2010*

Developed by the Family Support and Child Welfare Services
Statewide Training Partnership Advisory Committee

Contents

Executive Summary	iii
Strategic Planning Advisory Committee	v
Overview.....	1

Record and Findings from the Strategic Planning Process

Step 1. Defining the Planning Process and Interviewing Topic Choices.....	7
Step 2. Reviewing Our History	10
Step 3. Visioning.....	12
Step 4. Exploring Contradictions	15
Step 5. Identifying Strategic Directions for the Staff Development System.....	17
Step 6. Setting Objectives for NC DSS Staff Development, 2005-2010	18

Appendices

A: Norms for Strategic Planning Process.....	25
B:	
b1. Appreciative Interview Tips.....	26
b2. Training System Impact Interviews	27
b3. County Training System Interviews.....	28
b4. Family Involvement in State Training System Interviews.....	29
b5. Trends Interviews.....	30
C: Summary of Interview Themes	31
D: Learnings from Reviewing the History of the Training System.....	33
E: Sharing the Vision	35
F: Preliminary Vision Elements	36
G: Strategic Planning Session	38
H: Vision Workshop: The Staff Development System in 2010	41
I: Strategic Planning: Exploring Contradictions and Blocks to Our Vision.....	44
J: Strategic Directions	46

Executive Summary

The preparation and support of qualified and committed child welfare social work staff is essential for quality care for North Carolina's children and families. This is a complex responsibility shared by the NC Division of Social Services, the state's universities, the 100 county departments of social services, and the individual social workers themselves. A successful approach to ensuring qualified staff are in place requires the involvement, commitment, and coordination of individuals and systems at all levels.

The NC Division of Social Services Family Support and Child Welfare Services Statewide Training Partnership is a group of individuals representing the different levels and systems involved in the state's child welfare training efforts. In April 2004 a special working group from the Partnership was charged with setting a course for training and development within the child welfare system between 2005 and 2010. This document, which describes the process and conclusions of this working group, will serve as a guide for staff development efforts over the next five years.

This strategic plan builds upon the Partnership's 1998 visioning and goal-setting work, which yielded a set of nine ambitious goals for the child welfare training system. Between 1999 and 2004 North Carolina made tremendous progress on these nine goals. There are many concrete accomplishments of note, including the creation and provision of standardized pre-service and foundation level training, the establishment of a fifth regional training center, and the linking of training courses to specific child welfare competencies.

However, the dynamic nature of most of the goals demanded continual course corrections to address emerging needs. For example, the standardized pre-service curriculum has been developed, revised, and is currently in revision once again. This is not a failure by any measure. Rather, it represents the state's commitment to ensuring the pre-service curriculum meets legislative mandates and adequately addresses the needs of the field. Providing that assurance will require a continual loop of revision and refinement.

Strategic Planning for the Next Five Years

Given the evolving nature of the demands on the state's training system, in 2004 the Partnership engaged in a strategic—rather than goal-setting—planning process that produced the following strategic directions and objectives for child welfare training in North Carolina from 2005–2010.

Strategic Directions for the Learning System

Based on extensive interviews, a review of the training system's history, and a visioning process, the Partnership developed four strategic directions linked directly to the values and mission of the NC Division of Social Services:

1. **Continual Improvement:** Examine and improve our practice by supporting and developing trainers in the system and by integrating evaluation to inform policy and practice

2. **Collaboration:** Invite others in by supporting and promoting collaboration and inclusion at all levels and by effectively managing public relations
3. **Integration:** Connect elements of the system by integrating training, practice, policy, and evaluation and by promoting leaders as teachers within the system
4. **Experimentation:** Experiment with new approaches by exploring small scale innovations and new uses for technology

For a more detailed description of these strategic directions, turn to page 17 of this report.

NCDSS Staff Development Objectives: 2005-2010

Though the Partnership acknowledged its approaches would need to be adapted over time, it identified the following working objectives to guide the efforts of staff development personnel over the coming years:

1. Engage families and youth in the learning system
2. Enhance professional development of social workers
3. Enhance professional development of supervisors
4. Support leadership development among administration and management staff
5. Expand training and support to enhance skills of foster parents
6. Enhance professional development of trainers
7. Promote the professional development of Work First staff
8. Incorporate technology and e-learning into the learning system
9. Insure evaluation is an integral component of the learning system
10. Integrate training, practice, and policy
11. Increase understanding of and expand access to the learning system

For a more detailed description of these objectives, please turn to page 18 of this report.

Recommendations for the Future

To ensure the viability and relevance of this strategic plan, the Partnership recommends that there be established a regular process to monitor, refine, and update the plan. Staff development personnel and the Partnership should share this responsibility and should conduct at least annual reviews of progress and challenges encountered. These reviews will inform the continual adaptation and revision of approaches taken to ensure North Carolina has a capable child welfare workforce to serve our state's families and children.

— *Strategic Planning Advisory Committee, Family Support and Child Welfare Services
Statewide Training Partnership*

Strategic Planning Advisory Committee

FAMILY SUPPORT AND CHILD WELFARE SERVICES STATEWIDE TRAINING PARTNERSHIP

Many perspectives are represented in this document. That was the intention: to create a strategic plan that not only reflects the vision of the families, foster parents, youth, and professionals involved in our system at the national, state, regional, and county levels, but that also includes the perspectives of many others serving North Carolina's families. Creating this strategic plan took over 18 months and required membership from the following core group:

- Jo Ann Lamm, *NC Division of Social Services*
- Teresa Turner, *NC Division of Social Services*
- Ruth Harrison, *NC Division of Social Services*
- Rebecca Huffman, *NC Division of Social Services*
- Janine Russell, *NC Division of Social Services*
- Rebecca Brigham, *UNC-CH School of Social Work*
- Pat Solomon, *NC Families United*
- Sara Jarvis, *Center for Creative Education, Inc.*
- John Alderson, *Resources for Change, Inc.*
- Evelyn Williams, *NC Education Collaborative, UNC-CH*
- Gary Nelson, *Jordan Institute for Families, UNC-CH School of Social Work*
- Lane Cooke, *Jordan Institute for Families, UNC-CH School of Social Work*
- Patrice White, *Appalachian Family Innovations, Appalachian State University*
- Katherine Williamson-Hardy, *Appalachian Family Innovations, Appalachian State University*
- Joan Pennell, *NC Family-Centered Meetings Project, NC State University*
- Kara Allen-Eckard, *NC Family-Centered Meetings Project, NC State University*
- Betsy Lindsey, *University of NC-Greensboro*
- Fasih Ahmed, *NC Agricultural and Technical State University*
- Donnie Alston, *Wake County Human Services*
- Jennifer Taylor, *Wilson County DSS*

In the process of its work, this Advisory Committee also reached out to the following individuals and groups, whom we thank for their generous assistance:

- Strong Able Youth Speaking Out (SaySo)
- NC Foster & Adoptive Parent Association
- NC Families United
- National Alliance on Mental Illness
- Family Support Network
- Directors of training in other states
- State and county child welfare trainers
- NC's Children's Program Representatives and Work First Representatives
- University and NC Education Collaborative Personnel
- Directors, program managers, supervisors, and workers from county departments of social services

Finally, we would like to extend a special thanks to Sara Jarvis, from the Center for Creative Education, and John Alderson, of Resources for Change, who served as process facilitators for this working group and as the compilers of the first draft of this report.

Overview

The preparation and support of qualified and committed child welfare social work staff is essential for quality care for North Carolina's children and families. This is a complex responsibility shared by the NC Division of Social Services, the state's universities, the 100 county departments of social services, and individual social workers. A successful approach to ensuring qualified staff are in place requires the involvement, commitment, and coordination of individuals and systems at all levels.

The NC Division of Social Services Family Support and Child Welfare Services Statewide Training Partnership is a group of individuals representing the different levels and systems involved in the state's child welfare training efforts. In April 2004 a special working group from the Partnership was charged with setting a course for training and development within the child welfare system between 2005 and 2010.

To carry out this task, this working group engaged in a variety of activities to ensure that it had the information it needed to formulate a vision and create a strategic plan for the learning system. These activities included:

- Extensive interviews with a wide range of stakeholders and experts
- Review of the training system's history
- Visioning
- Exploration of the blocks, barriers, and contradictions likely to be encountered
- Development of strategic directions linked directly to the values and mission of the NC Division of Social Services
- Creation of objectives to guide staff development efforts between 2005 and 2010

This document, which describes in detail the process and conclusions of this working group, will serve as a guide for child welfare staff development efforts in North Carolina over the next five years.

Strategic Planning for the Next Five Years

The work summarized here builds upon the visioning and goal-setting work of the Partnership in 1998. The 1998 effort yielded a set of nine ambitious goals for the child welfare training system for the period encompassing 1999-2004:

1. Cataloging child welfare competencies;
2. Providing standardized pre-service, foundation level, and specialized training for child welfare and community professionals;
3. Implementing a statewide individualized training competency assessment;
4. Establishing a fifth regional training center;
5. Developing a pool of competent trainers;

6. Linking curricula to competencies;
7. Integrating evaluation into all levels of the training system;
8. Promoting ongoing and collaborative planning; and
9. Promoting transfer of learning throughout the system.

Since 1999 North Carolina has made tremendous progress on each of these goals. There are many concrete accomplishments of note (e.g., providing standardized pre-service and foundation level training; establishing the fifth regional training center; linking curricula to competencies).

However, the dynamic nature of most of the goals has demanded continual course corrections to address emerging needs. For example, the standardized pre-service curricula has been developed, revised, and is currently in revision once again. This is not a failure by any measure. Rather, it reflects the state's commitment to ensuring the pre-service curriculum meets legislative mandates and adequately addresses the needs of the field. Providing that assurance requires a continual loop of revision and refinement.

Looking Ahead to 2005-2010: Wisdom from the Field

The strategic planning process used by the Partnership's working group began with a comprehensive, appreciative interview process with individuals across the state and nation focused on four areas: family involvement, impact of the training system, county training systems, and trends. The following cross-cutting concepts emerged and helped to shape the group's work at each stage of the strategic planning process:

- This is a **learning system**, not simply a training system
- Efforts on every level must provide a clear link to **values**
- **Collaboration** and engagement with other systems and with families is key
- **Continuous evaluation** efforts are critical to success
- **Organizational capacity** must be developed at all levels

These concepts were reinforced in the group's review of the history of the state's training efforts. It was clear that successes had emerged from a commitment to developing a comprehensive system that valued evaluation, developed the expertise of its staff, collaborated across and with the system, and engaged stakeholders.

Crafting a Vision

The interviews and history review set the stage for visioning. The group developed a preliminary vision which members then shared with various constituent groups. Feedback from the field was incorporated into a final vision workshop that identified eight areas of consensus. The group agreed that the learning system must:

- Establish a **continuum of learning opportunities** for those within Family Support and Child Welfare Services
- Continually **adapt curricula** to insure relevance and accessibility

- Provide support for knowledge and skills in the **working environment**
- **Communicate** effectively communication about the learning system
- Systematize approaches to **learning for staff development personnel**
- Integrate **evaluation** into all levels of the learning system
- **Involve families and youth** to inform the learning system
- Strengthen **partnerships**

Exposing Contradictions

The vision was clear – and not unlike the one developed five years earlier. What could the group do to insure its path was as barrier-free as possible as it set out to live out this vision? One way was to honestly confront the internal contradictions held by the individuals and systems engaged in this work. By looking at the system's patterns of action and thought, the group was able to honestly address the ways in which the system itself sometimes blocks its own progress. From this process, it became clear that the system needed strategic directions needed to channel efforts in ways that encouraged creative thinking, recognized expertise at all levels, integrated (rather than added on) new initiatives, and recognized the complexity and variability of practice across the state.

Strategic Directions

From the extensive interviews, review of history, visioning, and exploration of contradictions, the group developed a set of four strategic directions linked directly to the values and mission of the NC Division of Social Services. These four directions will guide the work of the Partnership and NCDSS Staff Development team over the next five years.

1. **Continual Improvement:** Examine and improve our practice by supporting and developing trainers in the system and by integrating evaluation to inform policy and practice
2. **Collaboration:** Invite others in through supporting and promoting collaboration and inclusion at all levels and by effectively managing public relations
3. **Integration:** Connect elements of the system by integrating training, practice, policy, and evaluation and by promoting leaders as teachers within the system
4. **Experimentation:** Experiment with new approaches by exploring small scale innovations and new uses for technology

The Work Plan

Though the group acknowledged the system's approaches would need to be adapted over time, it identified a set of working objectives to guide the efforts of staff development personnel over the coming years. The following objectives were drafted by a subcommittee and refined by the larger

group in an effort to operationalize the Partnership's ideas and aspirations. The objectives are summarized below; a more detailed version may be found in the body of the final report:

1. Engage families and youth in the learning system
2. Enhance professional development of social workers
3. Enhance professional development of supervisors
4. Support leadership development among administration and management staff
5. Expand training and support to enhance skills of foster parents
6. Enhance professional development of trainers
7. Promote the professional development of Work First staff
8. Incorporate technology and e-learning into the learning system
9. Insure evaluation is an integral component of the learning system
10. Integrate training, practice, and policy
11. Increase understanding of and expand access to the learning system

Recommendations for the Future

To ensure the viability and relevance of this strategic plan, the Partnership recommends that there be established a regular process to monitor, refine, and update the plan. Staff development personnel and the Partnership should share this responsibility and should conduct at least annual reviews of progress and challenges encountered. These reviews will inform the continual adaptation and revision of approaches taken to ensure North Carolina has a capable child welfare workforce to serve our state's families and children.

Record and Findings from the Strategic Planning Process

STEP 1:

Defining the Planning Process and Interviewing Topic Choices

In an April 2004 session the core strategic planning group (see page v for a complete list of members) clarified its primary goal and determined the participatory processes to use to develop this five year plan. This group built norms for itself to operate by as a group. The bulk of time was spent developing a consistent interview process to use with a wide range of people across the state and country. After determining the themes to investigate, the group developed interview guides for each area. Finally, the group identified a long list of prospective interviewees and group members signed up to conduct.

The Planning Process

The group began by clarifying the primary goal of this long range planning process. After some discussion the group decided the main focus would be to develop a strategic plan for success in the NCDSS state training system by identifying *what currently works best* in the system and by crafting strategies that *build on these positive features and approaches*. The group concluded that this appreciative approach would serve the primary purposes most effectively. The group chose a process that was different from other planning processes. The group chose a process that sets a direction—not specific goals—a process that builds in flexibility and the ability to adapt to changes as they occur, one that recognizes the value of information from a wide range of sources.

To insure safety and a respectful group process, as well as to hold the group accountable, this group developed and adopted norms for its work together. The group based its norms on family-centered principles of partnership:

- Everyone desires respect
- Everyone needs to be heard
- Everyone has strengths
- Judgments can wait
- Partners share power
- Partnership is a process

The group operationalized these principles so that its norms would reflect specific behaviors that group members committed to live by in order to do this work as a well-functioning team. For a complete list of norms see Appendix A.

The Interviewing Process

The primary task of this session was to adopt a consistent interview process to use when seeking information and feedback from a wide range of sources. The group chose an *appreciative inquiry* approach that draws on the best of what is happening in the system. This approach is different from others because it seeks to discover and build on strengths and successes, searches for the best in people, and strengthens a system's capacity to build on positive potential. The group developed a set of focus questions for the interviews and practiced using them with each other. These questions asked a participant to focus on a positive peak experience in the state training system and to discuss the core factors that had the most value for them in their experience. In addition, participants were asked to envision their ideal training partnership in five years and to describe the structures, processes, and activities that they imagined taking place. Interviewers took notes to capture core elements and visions of the future

After practicing the interview process, group members shared from their interviews their peak experiences in the training system. Next, the group fleshed out the key elements of the peak experiences. Finally, the group organized the peak experiences and core elements, identifying four major themes:

- Family involvement in state training system
- Training system impact
- County training system
- Local, state, and national trends

From this work the group developed interview guides for each theme. Also, the group identified persons and organizations to interview to assure a wide range of perspectives. The group chose to seek information from people in all levels of the state and county systems, as well as persons in other systems, both at a state and national level. The group agreed that it was crucial to invite the perspective of families as well. The last task was to identify which persons each of the group members would interview. The group agreed that a time frame for these interviews was three months, and agreed to return in August with written reports. The tips for appreciative interviews as well as the interview guides are found in Appendix B.

Results of the Interviewing Process

In the next two planning sessions, group members reported on their interview experiences. The group discussed interviews by topic area (i.e., family involvement, training system impacts, county training system, and trends). The group identified significant common elements of interest from each of the four topic areas.

Finally, through review of this process and reflective discussion, the group named five cross-cutting concepts from the interviews:

- This is a learning system—not simply a training system.

- Our efforts on every level must provide a clear link to the values we promote.
- We must understand, respect, and engage with other systems—with families, with county agencies, with colleges and universities, with other parts of the state system, and with private providers.
- We must honor and evaluate our efforts on a continual basis.
- We must attend to developing an organizational capacity for learning at all levels (e.g., state, county, university).

These concepts are outlined with relevant themes from the interviews associated with each issue in Appendix C.

STEP 2: Reviewing Our History

This step took place in October 2004. To inform our process, the group had decided that it would be important to review the NC Division of Social Services' training history. The group constructed a time line starting in the early 1970s and running out to 2005. Each group member took a turn signing in when he or she first became involved with the NCDSS training system. The group then reviewed the time line chronologically, inviting members to share stories about the times when they were first involved. Members were asked to consider and name people, events, programs, funding sources, and political processes that affected the training system in either positive or negative ways. The group eagerly listened to stories throughout the entire morning. All of the group members—including those who signed in earliest in the 1970s—reported that they had learned a great deal.

The Learning Process from Reviewing History

Following the construction of the time line, the group had a dialogue about what it was learning from reviewing the history.

First, the group noticed that **there is a history of reacting to the environment.** Funding, policy, and legislation have driven our work. On large scale roll outs like the Cornerstone trainings the training system has stretched and strained both the counties and the trainers. Despite this reactive approach, the system has been successful in many ways. The system accomplished what it set out to do in the strategic plan five years ago (1999-2004). With the Cornerstone series the system has trained hundreds of supervisors and workers to support the implementation of family-centered practice.

The system has created a strong, comprehensive system for training that has attracted national attention. Prior to the late 1980s, training was a hit-or-miss affair, and certainly not coordinated throughout the state. By the early 1990s a breadth of trainings were offered and a training system was put into place. There is now a stronger, more experienced group of trainers and learning facilitators in the system. There is certainly more expertise and the system has attracted some national attention (e.g., Cornerstone series, evaluation efforts, *Children's Services Practice Notes*).

The system has created a learning system that seeks to continually evaluate and improve its work. The Division has demonstrated a commitment to improving practice, conducting evaluation, and improving curricula. The computerized data base provides the ability to track training efforts. And over time, the training system has increasingly focused on application of learning by participants.

The training system has committed to developing the expertise of its members. The Division is committed to the professional development of trainers at all levels of the training

system. As a result, the system has more competent trainers as reflected by evaluations. In addition, some curricula are now revised based on evaluation.

Collaboration and partnership have enhanced the system's ability to provide quality learning opportunities for those in the field. The statewide training partnership is the strongest it has ever been, and this has resulted in the sharing of resources. The NC Education Collaborative has been a very successful effort that has served as a strong resource for counties throughout the 1990s. More counties are providing their own customized staff development in-house.

Engaging stakeholders in planning and implementation has made the training system more effective. The state training system has solicited county involvement and input through surveys, interviews, and participation in planning. A 60% response rate on surveys from counties suggests that counties have come to trust the state's intention to use their information in design and delivery of training. And last, but not least, the system recognizes that family involvement is needed at all levels to improve our system and to implement needed changes.

A summary of key learnings from the history review can be found in Appendix D.

STEP 3: Visioning

Overview

Preliminary vision. Establishing the vision for the coming five years was a multi-step process. It began with a review of the information collected thus far from the review of the history of the training system and from interviews with those in the field. From that base, the group engaged in a guided journey to a point five years into the future. From those individual journeys, the group compiled a shared vision of the training system's future.

Feedback from the field. The next step was to take that preliminary vision back to the field. Members of the group agreed to meet with individuals and groups to seek their feedback and advice about the relevance and focus of the vision. That feedback process took place over the next three months. A summary of this process and suggested questions for interviews are found in Appendix E.

The group reconvened in early February 2005 to share the feedback from the field. Following the reports from the members, the group organized the feedback into areas of concern and interest. This list served as a guide and reminder when the group met to draft the finalized vision.

Establishing a shared vision. The group met again in late February to develop its vision for the coming five years. Through a facilitated process moving from individual to small groups to the large group, the members generated the key elements of the vision for the training system.

A. The Visioning Process

In the November 12, 2004 vision session the planning group looked toward the future, plotted a direction, and identified some of the considerations it wants to keep in mind. Those considerations included three general categories:

- A focus on the training system as a learning system
- Attention to three levels of operation: individual, organizational, and systemic
- Identification of emerging themes related to these three levels

A more detailed summary of these categories can be found in Appendix F.

During that meeting the group identified some key collaborators with whom it wished to share its preliminary thoughts. It was hoped that, in doing this, the group would gather even more ideas and find even more ways to connect with the system's colleagues. Group members agreed to share the vision with identified individuals and with groups at their regularly scheduled meetings. Group members were supplied with a packet of materials (included in Appendix G) to guide their conversations. Since many of these meetings were scheduled in January the group agreed to meet in early February to share their findings.

B. Feedback from the Field

This meeting was devoted to discussing feedback from the field about the preliminary vision elements. Strategic planning group members attended meetings during December and January and presented the developing vision. The reports the group heard from those meetings included comments from: a county director, the educational collaborative steering committee, Family Net coordinators, the NC Association of County Directors of Social Services training work group, NCDSS team leaders, the youth group Strong Able Youth Speaking Out (SaySo), the NC Foster and Adoptive Parent Association, NCDSS Children's Program Representatives (CPRs), NCDSS Work First Representatives (WFRs), and state, regional, and contract trainers.

The conversations that followed the presentations helped the group identify areas of concern and sparked new connections for consideration. At the end of the meeting, the group generated a list of issues and ideas that it wanted to remember for its visioning workshop on February 22, 2005. Those issues included:

- Marketing and communication about the learning system
- Collaborating within and across the system
- Incorporating training ideas from the field
- Providing support for participants in their work
- Focusing on the development of supervisors and leaders
- Providing professional development for trainers
- Engaging in small experiments to test out new approaches
- Improving existing curricula
- Enhancing the evaluation of training

A more detailed list of these issues may be found in Appendix H.

C. Establishing a Shared Vision

On February 22, the group reviewed its progress to date and situated this meeting's work in the larger picture. The group then reviewed the emailed summary of its last conversation about feedback from the field to insure those ideas were part of its thinking as it moved forward.

The group joined in a brief visualization of 2010 and what it would like the system to look like at that point. The group noted key ideas and, individually, listed at least ten concrete examples of what it would like to see in place in five years.

The group began its vision workshop with group members working in twos and threes to develop joint lists of 10-15 ideas. They wrote these ideas on half sheets. The facilitators collected the half sheets; members grouped them in like categories and named each group. The results of this work— eight areas of consensus—are included below. Each category represents a different

answer to the vision workshop question: What do we want to see in place for the staff development system in 2010?

1. Ensure knowledge and skills are supported in the working environment
2. Develop an effective process for communicating about the learning system
3. Create a systematized approach to learning for staff development personnel
4. Provide a continuum of learning opportunities for constituents within Family Support and Child Welfare Services System
5. Utilize evaluation to enhance effectiveness of the learning system and of practice within Family Support and Child Welfare
6. Analyze and adapt courses and their delivery to insure they are relevant, consistent, and accessible
7. Involve families and youth to inform the learning system
8. Support and develop a network of partnerships to strengthen the learning system

A more complete listing under each of these areas of concern is found in Appendix H.

Following the vision work, the group reflected on its work and identified additional areas of concern. Below are listed some themes that are covered in the vision, but that deserve special emphasis because of the strong response from the field:

- Supervisors training and supporting their staff as they go through training
- Web-based learning/technology
- Being intentional about partnering with Work First — possibly develop a strategic plan with WFRs

STEP 4: Exploring Contradictions

In this step, taken at a session in March 2005, the group explored the blocks, barriers, and contradictions they were likely to encounter as they pursued the vision. The work of this session was designed to inform the group's identification of its strategic directions.

The group identified blocks for each of the vision elements. Working first individually, then in small groups, and finally in the large group, they sorted through the blocks and chose those they believed to be most important to address. Those blocks were shared, grouped by theme, and clustered into similar categories. The seven contradictions, outlined below, provided the group a more informed context from which to address the strategic directions in the following session.

The Contradictions Process

Contradictions are similar to the obstacles or barriers more commonly explored in planning processes. However, they are also different in some fundamental ways. First, they look beyond the external problems to the habits of behavior and patterns of thinking within individuals, organizations, and systems. It is these habits and patterns that can serve to derail new initiatives. Second, contradictions focus on root causes of problems rather than the problems themselves. When seeking to discover contradictions, groups are encouraged to think deeper, to push past the usual blocks to the sources of those blocks. Until the sources are identified and addressed, there will be little hope of sustaining change.

As described above, group members looked at each vision element and generated contradictions they could see for each element. They worked in small groups to share their lists and sought consensus on the most important ones to address. Those were posted; similar ones were clustered together and clusters were named to reflect their common source. The seven topics listed below reflect the large group's consensus on the causes of the contradictions. See Appendix I for details on the specific blocks that were clustered to form each of these groups.

1. Reactive, short-term, in-the-box thinking
2. Threat to our identity and sense of belonging
3. Default setting is "expertosis"
4. Intolerance for ambiguity
5. Adding/layering rather than integrating
6. Compliance mentality builds low risk tolerance
7. Complexity and variability of practice

Throughout the day, the group challenged itself to look beyond the surface to the root of the difficulties it anticipated. For example, the group identified turf protection and inflexibility as possible blocks. The group then considered the possible underlying cause and agreed that turf

protection and inflexibility are rooted in a perceived threat to the system's identity and its members' sense of belonging.

The group challenged itself to go beyond the usual explanation that a "lack of" things (e.g., funding) is responsible for blocks. Rather than identify a "lack of funding," for example, it identified "funding restrictions." In that way it gets closer to the root of the problem. The group sees that the limits on how it can spend the money, rather than simply the lack of money, may be the true block to its progress.

The group challenged itself to look in the mirror before casting blame for difficulties. By looking honestly and clearly at its own mindsets and by attempting to put itself in others' shoes, the group hoped to open its eyes to the larger system within which this vision must be realized. For example, when the group looked at blocks such as token involvement of families and unrealistic expectations, it stepped back and looked at how its mindsets contribute to these problems. The group identified its own "expertosis"—the belief that ultimately the group, rather than families or other partners—are the experts in how and what to do. The group's expertosis is a block that limits others' participation.

STEP 5:

Identifying Strategic Directions for the Staff Development System

In this step, taken at an April 2005 session, the group reviewed the contradictions generated at the previous meeting and clarified their meaning and intent. The group then reviewed the vision for the next five years.

Given the vision and the contradictions, the group generated a list of practical, innovative actions it could take to deal with its contradictions and move toward the future. Those ideas were grouped into eight arenas of common intent. Those arenas were then grouped into four strategic directions.

The Strategic Directions Process

After the group reviewed the vision and the blocks it expected to encounter when implementing that vision, group members generated individual lists of practical and innovative actions that would move the system toward the shared vision while addressing the identified blocks and contradictions. Members then shared their individual lists in small groups and agreed on a common set of actions.

Those actions were shared with the large group and clustered in eight categories of common intent. Those eight categories were then grouped into four strategic directions. The four directions and eight categories are listed below. See Appendix J for a detailed listing of the actions within each category.

1. Continual Improvement: Examining and improving practice
 - A. Support and develop trainers
 - B. Evaluation that informs practice and policy
2. Collaboration: Inviting others in
 - A. Support collaboration and inclusion
 - B. Effective public relations
3. Integration: Connecting the elements of the system
 - A. Integration of training, practice, policy, and review/evaluation
 - B. Leaders as teachers
4. Experimentation: Trying new approaches
 - A. Small-scale innovation
 - B. Technology use

STEP 6:

Setting Objectives for NC DSS Staff Development, 2005-2010

In September 2005 a subcommittee met to review the group's work and develop clear objectives for the coming five years. These objectives were to be formulated in such a way as to provide staff with clear direction for their work.

The subcommittee met and reviewed the work of the strategic planning group (interviews, history, vision, contradictions, and strategic directions). Based on this review, they developed a set of ten objectives. Those objectives were emailed to the strategic planning group for review and revision. Feedback was incorporated and a final draft was shared at the final meeting of the planning group in October 2005. The following objectives represent the feedback from the final group meeting.

Objectives for NC DSS Staff Development for 2005-2010

1. Engage families and youth in the learning system

- Involve families and youth as advisors for the learning system
- Engage youth and families in the development and delivery of learning experiences
- Compensate families and youth for their time and effort

2. Enhance professional development of social workers

- Continue to provide competency-based learning for social workers
 - Level 100
 - Level 200
 - Level 300
- Revise pre-service curriculum
- Develop a comprehensive, competency-based learning program for licensing workers which incorporates current offerings from Staff Development and current licensing training
- Conduct ongoing development and revision of Personalized Learning Portfolio and Individual Learning Assessments
- Conduct ongoing assessment of training needs and develop curricula to meet those needs
- Enhance and support access for social work education for current DSS personnel
- Enhance and support access for social work education for persons new to the field

3. Enhance professional development of supervisors

- Continue to provide learning opportunities for supervisors such as:
 - *Introduction to Supervision for Child Welfare Supervisors*
 - *Cornerstone 2: What's Good for Families Is Good for Workers*
- Develop and implement new offerings for supervisors such as:
 - *Cornerstone 4: Working with Outcomes, Working with Others*
 - *Supervisors' Guide to Retention*
 - *Coaching Workers* (guiding workers, supporting transfer of learning)
 - *Technical Assistance Groups* (promoting learning on technical issues such as time management, case load tracking)
- Develop and articulate framework and process for professional development of supervisors
 - Link and integrate learning opportunities into a cohesive structure
 - Provide clear explanation as to how components relate to one another
 - Delineate points of access
- Enhance and support access to social work education for current DSS supervisors

4. Support leadership development among administration and management staff

- Continue to provide professional development opportunities such as:
 - *Cornerstone 4: Working with Outcomes, Working with Others*
 - *Director's Guide to Retention*
- Develop and implement new offerings for administrators and managers such as:
 - *Capstone* series
- Conduct ongoing assessment of training needs and develop curricula to meet those needs
- Collaborate with the NC Association of County Directors of Social Services to assess, develop, and deliver professional development opportunities for administrators and managers
- Investigate models and methods for promoting organizational effectiveness
- Clarify and articulate the role of the staff development system in promoting organizational development and leadership development

5. Expand training and support to enhance skills of foster parents

- Continue to develop and provide learning opportunities for foster parents and for social workers who support development of foster parents:
 - *MAPP*
 - *MAPP Unite*
 - *CSA/MAPP*
- Collaborate with the NC Foster and Adoptive Parent Association (NCFAPA) to assess, develop and deliver training for foster parents

- Establish partnership with NCFAPA
- Contract with foster parents for assistance in development and training

6. Enhance professional development of trainers

- Continue to provide learning opportunities for trainers such as:
 - Professional development group
 - Training skills workshops
- Support trainers' involvement in state and national conferences that support their skill development
- Develop and articulate a structured system for the professional development of trainers including:
 - Manual for trainers outlining what is expected of them (e.g., learning process, on-the-job experiences, readings, training tools and tips, observing and being observed, co-training, debrief and feedback process)
 - Link with other trainer development systems to explore different approaches

7. Promote the professional development of Work First staff

- Provide joint training opportunities for Work First and child welfare staff
- Conduct a learning needs assessment
 - Identify competencies
 - Conduct job analyses
- Identify resources needed for professional development
- Create a strategic plan for professional development of Work First staff

8. Incorporate technology and e-learning into the learning system

- Pilot new approaches and evaluate results for online learning, teleconferences, and computer-based learning such as:
 - *Child Development in Families at Risk* (online curriculum blended with classroom)
 - *Coaching Workers* (online discussion groups blended with classroom)
 - *Cornerstone 4: Working with Outcomes, Working with Others* (using computer data bases in classroom)
 - Pre-service revisions (integrating online or computer-based learning)
 - Explore opportunities to broaden access to social work education degree courses (e-learning)
- Research and evaluate relevance of available technologies used by other systems

9. Insure evaluation is an integral component of the learning system

- Engage in ongoing curriculum analysis [structured process for analyzing curricula in relation to established competencies, family-centered practice, MRS principles, Child and Family Service Review, cultural competency, and extent of family involvement in the development and delivery of the curriculum]
- Continue to evaluate trainers' performance
- Continue to evaluate participants' satisfaction, learning, and application
- Link training to outcomes for children and families (incorporating evaluation as an integral part of planning and policy development)
- Continue to develop training data base
- Develop new strategic plan for evaluation

10. Integrate training, practice, and policy

- Collaborate within systems (e.g., Child Welfare, Work First, Children's Medicaid)
- Collaborate across systems (e.g., Mental Health, Public Health, Department of Public Instruction)
- Develop learning opportunities that respond to developing policy and practice with families

11. Increase understanding of and expand access to the learning system

- Continue to publish system offerings through the web and written catalogs
- Develop and implement a marketing plan that increases the transparency of and access to the learning system

Appendices

Norms for Strategic Planning Process

Everyone Desires Respect

- Recognizing we all have a piece of the puzzle, invite in diverse perspectives
- Avoid side conversations during meetings
- Participate during the entire process; avoid leaving early

Everyone Needs to Be Heard

- Listen all the way through; don't interrupt speakers
- Seek to understand before being understood; ask clarifying questions

Everyone Has Strengths

- Recognize and appreciate contributions
- Celebrate small steps

Judgments Can Wait

- Avoid blaming others
- Sort for positive intent of others

Partners Share Power

- Share relevant information with the group
- Be willing to take on planning tasks
- Share responsibility for resolving conflicts

Partnership Is a Process

- Participate regularly
- Avoid no-shows; call ahead if unable to participate
- Participate in evaluation of progress and of one's own participation in it
- Follow through on assigned tasks
- Stay focused on the task at hand

B1. Appreciative Interview Tips

Explain the process

Explain that the NC Division of Social Services Family Support and Child Welfare Services Statewide Training Partnership Advisory Committee is engaging in a strategic planning process to identify and plan for the positive development of the training system. This is an appreciative, strengths-focused process. This process focuses on what works – on the root causes of the training system's successes. We are interviewing stakeholders throughout the system about their positive experiences with the training system to help us identify the core of our success.

Focus on the positive

This process focuses on what IS working. By discovering the core of what is working, we can infuse life into the training system by building on what we know is already working. Focus on **positives**. If interviewees want to share negatives, try to redirect them to a time—even if it was only once and for a brief time—when they experienced their best in the topic.

Capture stories and quotes

Interviews will provide us with real life examples of what is working in the training system. Try to capture stories and quotes about successes. We will use these in our next steps and they provide good data for our future planning.

Take notes

Take notes on your interview forms. Be sure to capture the core elements and visions of the topic.

Invite future involvement

The training advisory group will be working over the coming months to develop a plan based on the feedback from the field. Inquire as to the interest of those interviewed in the final product. If they are interested, note that fact on their interview sheet and we will have a document sent to them.

B2. Training System Impact Interviews

The NC Division of Social Services Staff Development and Training System is designed to develop, implement, and evaluate a responsive, accessible training and educational system. By doing this we hope to help create and sustain a competent work force committed to supporting families and insuring safety for children.

1. Think of a specific highlight in your experience with the state training system. This was a time you felt you received the knowledge and skills you needed; the training was a fit for your situation. You felt respected. You felt the training made a difference for you and your work.
 - a. What was the situation?
 - b. Who else was involved?
 - c. What made it a highlight for you?

2. In this highlight experience, what did you value most?
 - a. The training curriculum (content and process)
 - b. The trainers
 - c. Your contribution
 - d. The contributions of others

3. What do you think was the core factor(s) that made this experience a highlight for you?

4. Imagine it is 2009. Everything is as you wished it would be for the training system.
 - a. What kinds of things would you and others be doing?
 - b. What supports would be in place to help us do this?

B3. County Training System Interviews

The NC Division of Social Services Staff Development and Training System is designed to develop, implement, and evaluate a responsive, accessible training and educational system. By doing this we hope to help create and sustain a competent work force committed to supporting families and insuring safety for children. For this effort to be successful, it's essential that the state and counties act in partnership. These questions focus on your experiences of staff development and training that has taken place within your county.

1. Think of a specific highlight in your experience of staff development and/or training within the county. This was a time you felt you received the knowledge and skills you needed; the training was a fit for your situation. You felt respected. You felt the training made a difference for you and your work.
 - a. What was the situation?
 - b. Who else was involved?
 - c. What made it a highlight for you?

2. In this highlight experience, what did you value most?
 - a. The training curriculum (content and process)
 - b. The trainers
 - c. Your contribution
 - d. The contributions of others

3. What do you think was the core factor(s) that made this experience a highlight for you?

4. Imagine it is 2009. Everything is as you wished it would be for the training system.
 - a. What kinds of things would you and others be doing?
 - b. What supports would be in place to help us do this?

B4. Family Involvement in State Training System Interviews

The NC Division of Social Services Staff Development and Training System is designed to develop, implement, and evaluate a responsive, accessible training and educational system. By doing this we hope to help create and sustain a competent work force committed to supporting families and insuring safety for children. In our efforts to insure our services are truly family-centered, we want to collect stories in which families have benefited from the efforts of the training system. Our hope is that these stories will give us valuable information about how to make our training system even more effective for our end users: the families we serve.

1. Think of a specific highlight in your experience of state and/or county training system. You felt respected. You felt families were respected. You felt the training made a difference for you and for families.
 - a. What was the situation?
 - b. Who else was involved?
 - c. What made it a highlight for you?

2. In this highlight experience, what did you value most?
 - a. The training curriculum (content and process)
 - b. The trainers
 - c. Your contribution
 - d. The contributions of others

3. What do you think was the core factor(s) that made this experience a highlight for you?

4. Imagine it is 2009. Everything is as you wished it would be for the training system.
 - a. What kinds of things would you and others be doing?
 - b. What supports would be in place to help us do this?

B5. Trends Interviews

The NC Division of Social Services Family Support and Child Welfare Services Statewide Training Partnership believes its work should be proactive and reflect best practices. Our training system should be flexible and ready to address changing opportunities and needs. To assure that we are always up to date on current trends in our field, we want to ask you a few questions. We appreciate your assistance in this effort.

1. What local, state, and national trends (e.g., economic, social, technical, educational) afford the greatest opportunities for the growth and success of the DSS training system?
 - a. Why?
 - b. What does this suggest we continue or begin doing?

2. What trends in the field of family and children's services (e.g., policies, models of care, funding streams) afford the greatest opportunities for the continued growth and success of the DSS training system?
 - a. Why?
 - b. What does this suggest we continue or begin doing?

3. What are other training systems (within the state and nationally) doing really well?
 - a. What does this suggest we continue or begin doing?

4. What are your most creative ideas for leveraging the current strengths and core capabilities of the DSS training system into such areas as:
 - a. Increased consumer satisfaction
 - b. Enhanced operational excellence
 - c. Totally new lines of services

Summary of Interview Themes

November 2004

Cross-Cutting Issues

Five cross-cutting issues emerged from the interviews conducted by members of the strategic planning group. The issues are outlined below with the relevant themes from the interviews associated with that issue.

1. **This is a learning system – not simply a training system.**

- We all teach; we all learn
- Focus on learning for social workers in the field, for those preparing for practice, and for trainers in the system
- Recognize and respond to the needs and strengths of those at different stages of professional development
- See our work as an integral part of the ongoing process of development – as part of the recruitment and retention of staff
- Adapt varied formats and different content to meet individual and county needs
- Use distance learning and coaching as part of the learning process
- Insure we link to practice, focus on transfer of learning
- Support supervisors to serve as coaches
- Build in follow up: training/learning is not simply an event
- Attend to all levels of the system (workers, supervisors, managers, directors)

2. **Our efforts on every level must provide a clear link to the values and principles we promote.**

- Model the values we promote
- Make our work transparent
- Build on strengths of the individual social workers, of the trainers, of the system
- Use data and research to inform what we do
- Fit best practice to the context in which it operates

3. **We must understand, respect, and engage with other systems: with families, with county agencies, with colleges and universities, with other parts of the state system, and with private providers.**

- Avoid overwhelming those in the field with training; be conscious in timing our roll-outs

- Link the policies we make with the values we promote
- Decentralize delivery of training/learning services (look at multi-county offerings which are not necessarily in regional training centers)
- Share accountability (state \leftrightarrow county)
- Encourage and support local and state structures that sustain the principles of family-centered practice
- Work across disciplines
- Involve stakeholders at all levels (e.g., families, children and youth, county staff, universities)
- Involve community partners

4. We must monitor and evaluate our efforts on a continual basis.

- Build in ongoing self-assessment
- Track successes
- See evaluation as formative, proactive, and iterative
- Provide regular feedback loops (within sessions, within the state system as a whole)
- Collect information and use it
- Vary methods of data collection (surveys, focus groups, interviews, pre- and post-tests, participant satisfaction forms, etc.)

5. We must attend to developing organizational capacity for learning at all levels (e.g., state, county, university)

- Provide onsite, customized learning opportunities based on county-identified needs
- Link integration of learning and training into policy changes (training/learning system should be at the table even if the issue is not specifically a training issue)
- Develop a critical mass of energy and common language for learning within organizations
- Work across agency divides within counties and within the state
- Broaden our focus from the individual to the organization
- Insure adequate, stable resources to support our efforts

Learnings from Reviewing the History of the Training System

October 14, 2004

There is a history of reacting to the environment:

- Funding has driven what the system has done and how it has approached its work
- Policy and legislation has driven the work
- Reduction in funds leads to cuts in training (offerings and participation)
- Training system has been reactive
 - In spite of this, it has had successes
 - Over time, it has moved toward a more proactive approach
- Our large scale roll outs (such as Cornerstone trainings) have stretched and strained the counties and trainers who have been involved

Despite its challenges, the system has accomplished a lot:

- The system accomplished what it set out to do five years ago
- The system trained hundreds of workers and supervisors in our roll out of Cornerstones 1, 2 and 3

The Statewide Training Partnership has created a strong, comprehensive system for training that has attracted national attention:

- The Division has demonstrated a commitment to training; between 1985 and 1990 we successfully created a training system
- There is a great breadth of training offered
- There is now a stronger, more experienced group of trainers and learning facilitators within the system
- The system has grown experts within its partners
- The system and curricula have attracted national attention (e.g., Cornerstone series, evaluation efforts, *Children's Services Practice Notes*)

The Statewide Training Partnership has created a learning system that seeks to continually evaluate and improve its work:

- As an organization, the Division has demonstrated a commitment to learning about its work and improving its practice

- The Division is committed to evaluation and to the improvement of curricula
- The system has used formative evaluation to refine our learning design and delivery
- The web-based data base provides the ability to track training efforts
- Participants are more satisfied with training than in the past
- We have focused, increasingly, on application of learning by participants

The training system has committed to developing the expertise of its members:

- The system employs competent trainers (positive Participant Satisfaction Forms indicate this)
- The system is committed to the professional development of trainers/learning facilitators at all levels

Collaboration and partnership have enhanced the system's ability to provide quality learning opportunities for those in the field:

- Collaboration and networking have made resources available
- The training partnership is the strongest it has ever been
- The training partnership is committed to modeling the family-centered practice principles it promotes
- The social work education collaborative has been a very successful effort
- Since the 1990s the schools of social work have served as strong resources for counties
- County training systems are a resource for staff
- Good training delivery models exist within counties

Engaging stakeholders in planning and implementation has made the training system more effective:

- The state training system has solicited county involvement and input through surveys, interviews, and participation in planning
- Counties have come to trust the state's intention to use their information in design and delivery of training
- The system recognizes that family involvement is needed at all levels to improve our system and to implement needed changes

Sharing the Vision

The Process

The strategic planning group convened individuals from across the training system (state, regional, and county trainers; university partners; private providers; central office staff; and family advocates). The group began its process by interviewing dozens of people around the state and the country. The group asked about trends that might affect the training system. The group asked about people's experience with the training system. The group asked about others' ideas for our future directions. The results of those interviews are summarized in Appendix C.

The group reviewed the history of the training system and identified what it had accomplished and what has been learned over the past 30 years. These are summarized in Appendix D.

In the vision session on Nov. 12, 2004 the group looked toward the future, plotted a direction, and identified some of the considerations it wants to keep in mind. During that meeting the group identified some key collaborators with whom it would like to share some of its preliminary thoughts. It was hoped that, by contacting key collaborators, the group would gather more ideas and find even more ways to connect with the system's colleagues.

Questions for the Group

After presenting, in your own words, the key elements of our vision, pose the following questions. Please take notes on the group's feedback so you can report your findings in our next meeting (1/7/05).

1. What strikes you about the vision I've presented? What most interests you?
2. What do you like best about it? What appeals most?
3. What challenges do you think we will face? What concerns do you have?
4. How might our vision intersect with the work of this group?
5. What ideas/suggestions can you offer us as we move forward?

Preliminary Vision Elements

November 12, 2004

Learning System

This vision is of a learning system, not a training system. By that the group means it intends to promote a system of learning that recognizes different learning styles and that understands and responds to the challenges of attending training. The vision includes, but is not limited to, traditional training workshops, distance learning, teleconferences, self-instructional packages, coaching, and mentoring.

Multiple Levels of Operation

The developing vision operates on three distinct levels (individual, organizational, and systemic). The group believes that change can begin at any of these levels, but is grounded in the individuals who take part in the change. In this vision, individuals learn new approaches, reflect on their experiences, notice successes, strategize to address challenges, and continually seek to improve their practice. This is true for line workers as well as agency directors, for trainers as well as for state leaders.

Emerging Themes

The themes that are emerging from these planning sessions cut across each of these levels. Though the theme may present differently at the individual level than it does at the organizational or systemic levels, the challenges and resources are similar. The themes are linked below to each level.

- 1. Individual.** This includes individuals who are social workers, supervisors, directors, family members, collaborators. Themes:
 - Connecting theory to practice
 - Modeling the practices we promote in our everyday interactions with clients, staff, and other agency personnel
 - Instilling confidence and a sense of pride in our work
 - Creating safety and trust for risking new approaches
 - Reflecting on and learning from our efforts

- 2. Organizational.** This includes organizations working with families, such as county agencies and their community partner agencies. Themes:

 - Enhancing organizational effectiveness by focused onsite work in individual county agencies
 - Assisting counties in their efforts to establish and maintain internal and community systems that support family-centered practice
 - Working with counties to develop and disseminate models for family-centered practice at all levels (worker to family, supervisor to worker, administration to staff, agency to community partners)

- 3. Systemic.** This includes the larger systems such as the NC Division of Social Services, the larger DSS system, other service systems (e.g., mental health, juvenile justice, courts, education, and public health). Themes:

 - Seeking out opportunities to collaborate across agency lines
 - Engaging in reflective practice (examining our own approaches for their match with the principles we promote)
 - Evaluating our efforts (using data we collect to grow and develop the system)

Strategic Planning Session

February 4, 2005

This meeting was devoted to discussing feedback from the field about the preliminary vision elements. Strategic planning group members attended meetings during December and January and presented the developing vision. The reports the group heard from those meetings included comments from a county DSS director, the NC Education Collaborative Steering Committee, FamilyNet coordinators, the NC Association of County Directors of Social Services training work group, NCDSS team leaders, the youth group SaySo, the NC Foster and Adoptive Parent Association, the Children's Program and Work First Representatives (CPRs and WFRs), and state, regional, and contract trainers.

The conversations that followed the presentations helped the group identify areas of concern and sparked new connections for consideration. At the end of the meeting, the group generated a list of issues and ideas that it wanted to remember for its visioning workshop on February 21, 2005 (at the Oberlin building from 9–4 p.m.). Following is that list.

Marketing and Communication

- Shift from training to learning across the system
- Marketing the learning system
- Consistent messages clearly communicated
- Intentional language re: "touchy-feely"
- Consider how to expand role from work with individual to include organizational work

Collaboration

- Making sure the system closes the loop with broad inclusion of all those who touch families
- Collaborate with other programs (especially Work First)
- Identify and create mechanisms to collaborate with directors, CPRs, WFRs
- Connect the dots across the system
 - Staff development, CPRs, biennial reviewers, policy units
- Build capacity for counties to collaborate with one another
- Consider state-county partnerships
- Shared staff development activities

Training Ideas

- Linking training ideas from directors to our existing ideas will yield a better product
 - Technical skills (day sheets)
 - Computer skills (Internet and computer-based training)
- Focus on retention—provide skills needed for that
- Fold MRS training into existing training—no longer separate when all counties in

Support for Participants

- Keep system and individuals informed about various initiatives
- Initiate a project cheat sheet
- Explain how trainings relate to initiatives (especially supervisor training)

Focus on Supervisors and Leaders

- Build capacity and capability for supervisors, program managers, and directors
 - Provide access to needed tools
 - Provide mechanisms for support
- Prepare supervisors, program managers, and directors for their roles
 - Consider a leadership institute
 - Transfer of learning
 - Coaching
 - Supporting staff
 - Building learning systems within units

Support for Trainers

- Provide flexibility and diversity in trainers' jobs
- Provide opportunities for trainer development
- Help trainers learn to connect activities to specific content and to agency work
- Provide consistent mechanisms for feedback about difficult training situations
 - How to insure participants' learning is not compromised
 - How to support trainers in their work
 - What role county has in insuring valid information is transmitted, in preparing staff for training

Experiment

- Experiment with new approaches before implementing large scale system change
SaySo youth as co-trainers and speakers

- Family involvement as co-trainers and speakers
- Consumer evaluation—linking efforts to outcomes
- Revised accountability measures—biennials that reflect family-centered work
- Transfer of learning innovations—consultation and follow up

Curricula

- Continuously improve existing curricula
- Analyze curricula to insure consistent messages
 - Intentional reinforcement (versus redundancy)
 - Avoid confusion and contradiction
 - Mesh, build on, dove-tail with so they complement one another
 - Insure family-centered principles are integrated
- Consider dual track for experienced vs. new learners
- Provide web and e-learning components (pre-training, during training, as TOL)

Evaluation

- Expand evaluation of training
 - Include federal outcomes
 - Link effect of training and practice in the field

Vision Workshop: The Staff Development System in 2010

Ensure knowledge and skills are supported in the working environment

- Staff development provides training and technical assistance, TOL, and evaluation in collaboration with CPRs, WFRs, etc.
- Staff development system has capacity to provide county-specific training and technical assistance on organization development to build county capacity
- Each county gets own staff development "allotment" to use for agency specific needs—perhaps used in collaboration with other counties
- Organization effectiveness: provide learning opportunities and network structure for connecting folks with similar need (possibly via the web)
- Supervisors and counties value the role of supervisor as facilitator for learning
- Counties support for supervisors role in transfer of learning
- Provide organizational development via needs assessment, acting as clearing house for training/technical assistance resources
- Experimenting with on-site, county-specific learning opportunities

Develop an effective process for communicating about the learning system

- Interactive web site (e.g., e-courses, marketing and publicity, resource material, individual and organizational assessment, updates on initiatives, forums, real-time discussion rooms)
- Develop a marketing plan for learning system

Create a systematized approach to learning for staff development personnel

- Annual staff development institute/retreat
- Staff development system that provides mutual support and that builds trainer capacity in curriculum development, implementation, and evaluation
- Seamless integration of process and content in training (combating the perception of activities as "touchy-feely")

Provide a continuum of learning opportunities for constituents within Family Support and Child Welfare Services System

- Common orientation for all DSS → focus on mission, values, importance of all functions

- Option to test out of knowledge specific training requirements
- Certificate programs linked to merit, incentives
- Expand number of BSW and MSW graduates focused on child welfare practice
- Supervisors training teaches knowledge and skills
- Utilize technology for learning assessment, coursework, etc.
- Develop a strategic plan for creating a learning system for Work First
- Collaboration and co-training with Work First

Utilize evaluation to enhance effectiveness of the learning system and of practice within family support and child welfare

- Evaluation on TOL and linking training to performance within CFSR
- TOL for ALL (accountability)
- Longitudinal studies of impact of particular practice in child and family team (e.g., child and family team meetings)
- Evaluation → performance retention

Analyze and adapt courses and their delivery to insure they are relevant, consistent, and accessible

- Curriculum review/adaptation/rewrites across the board to insure they are consistent, intentionally reinforce one another, educate about reforms
- Revision of pre-service training (dual track: new and experienced social workers)
- Coherent, consistent curricula with intentional redundancy for key knowledge and skills
- Targeted curriculum analysis
- Well-designed and evaluated computer-based training programs for appropriate knowledge and skills

Involve families and youth to inform the learning system

- Family and youth developing and delivering training
- Staff development pays young people and families to give input to curriculum development, co-train, and provide feedback on training
- Child/parent voice represented in every training offering through video, co-training, etc.

Support and develop a network of partnerships to strengthen the learning system

- Staff development provides information to universities on practices and trends in social services (e.g., class presentation, curriculum consult for faculty)
- Touchdown groups attend each other's staff meetings
- Staff development partnership continues to collaborate effectively
- Semiannual contract meetings with vendors, trainers, and registrars

- Staff development system offers joint trainings with child mental health, juvenile justice, and DPI with funding provided by involved systems

Reflections on this vision work

Below are listed some themes that are covered in the vision, but that deserve special emphasis because of the strong response from the field:

- Supervisors training and supporting their staff as they go through training
- Web-based learning/technology
- Being intentional about partnering with Work First—possibly developing a strategic plan with WFRs

APPENDIX I

Strategic Planning: Exploring Contradictions and Blocks to Our Vision

March 21, 2005

Reactive, short-term, in-the-box thinking

- Limited expertise (distance learning, organizational effectiveness, testing)
- Limited preparation, planning, partnering with counties on learning opportunities.
- Limited awareness and marketing (training website, distance learning, transfer of learning)
- Potential inequity for learning opportunities (staff development personnel)

Threat to identity and sense of belonging

- Turfism across agencies and programs. Difference in functions/ mandates; fear of losing identity
- Resistance to step outside our specialization content zones.
- Inflexibility of how to do the work
- "It's not my job" – role definition barriers
- Cross-system training vs. mandated closed system training
- Self protection (fear of exposing deficiencies)
- Turfism/"ownership" of curriculum for analysis
- Not trusting the change process (neutral zone)

Default setting is "expertosis"

- Paternalistic, objectified attitudes toward families ("We're the experts")
- Deficit-based approach models interaction between partners
- Unrealistic expectations of mothers
- No history as partners with families/youth
- Tokenism and exploitation of families
- Exclusion of parents and youth in services offered
- Narrow perspective on what is legitimate evaluation
- If we cannot do it perfectly, don't try (perfectionism)

Intolerance for ambiguity

- Consistency vs. creativity

- Tension between universally-mandated staff development/training and relevance to local communities
- Upholding consistent standards across staff development without ensuring accessibility and inclusiveness so participants can make it their own
- Different/divergent content needs across programs
- Funding restrictions and limitations on who gets what (funds that are limited and not flexible)

Adding/layering rather than integrating

- Competing demands for supervisors: managers vs. learning devices
- Competing demands (services vs. training vs. evaluation)
- Willingness to "settle" for less than the best (tokenism)

Compliance mentality builds low risk tolerance

- Penalizing and punitive approach to reviews
- Practice driven by antiquated review process

Complexity and variability of practice

- Unclear links between training content and family outcomes
- Not making the link between training and practice outcomes—how do you evaluate?

Strategic Directions

1. CONTINUAL IMPROVEMENT: EXAMINING AND IMPROVING PRACTICE

A. Support and develop trainers

- Help trainers adapt curricula for different audiences (tips, different agendas, take-home messages)
- More TOT/meetings for trainers of specific curricula (e.g., pre-service training course, Cornerstone III) – purpose is consistency and evolution
- A structure that supports and reinforces/holds accountable trainer development and trainer partnership (reinforce follow-through with rewards and celebration)

B. Evaluation that informs practice and policy

- Taking a look at short-intermediate-long term investment strategies
- Regular assessing of successes, resource needs, capacity, and next steps (to include dissemination)
- Mechanisms for accountability (structures in place)
- Find out how other states are evaluating training
- Include evaluation of practice at (or after) case closure
- Clarify level of certainty needed for evaluation of training
- Process evaluation with federal Child and Family Services Review (CFSR)
- Evaluation as empowerment
- Process to use evaluation results

2. COLLABORATION: INVITING OTHERS IN

A. Support collaboration and inclusion

- Training system rewards/prioritizes resources for collaborative ventures
- Finding dollars to support having family groups at the table and to find new ways to get new voices to the table
- Involve stakeholders (clients, DSS staff) in training
- County leadership included in training partnership and roll-out of strategic plan
- Families co-develop and co-train (e.g., Donna Foster and family shared parenting)
- Train county staff in how to involve families (including this in curricula)
- Make workgroups inclusive (county directors, consumers, etc.)
- Utilize peer reviewers in CFSRs
- Partners not adversaries

- Co-development and co-training across partners (e.g., Resources for Change and Jordan Institute for Families, Appalachian Family Innovations and NC State University)

B. Effective public relations

- Marketing plan/campaign for strategic plan
- Anticipate fear and anxiety and work to prevent it
- Strong Able Youth Speaking Out (SaySo) on training partnership
- Go to meeting of consumer groups (updates and feedback)
- Be intentionally redundant in our communication (different ways, multiple attempts)

3. INTEGRATION: CONNECTING THE ELEMENTS OF THE SYSTEM

A. Integration of training, practice, policy, and review/evaluation

- Link training to federal outcomes
- Highlight review process in existing training(s)
- Support UNC-Chapel Hill's project "Child Welfare Staff Recruitment and Retention: An Evidence-Based Training Model" (linking outcomes to client outcomes)

B. Leaders as teachers

- Develop supervisors as learning devices using multilevel mechanisms (supervisors, directors)
- Supporting local infrastructure, transfer of learning
- Help managers and supervisors see relevance of training and connection to outcomes
- Family-centered meeting facilitators' development and growth using multilevel mechanisms (facilitator forums, supervisors)
- Preparing supervisors and managers to educate their staff

4. EXPERIMENTATION: TRYING NEW APPROACHES

A. Small scale innovation

- Pilot a comprehensive consumer/outcome evaluation of training services in targeted areas
- System of care: (1) demonstrate cross-training success, (2) demonstrate cross-system collaboration, (3) advertise results
- Identify, reward, and advertise/market innovation
- Identify, develop, and market a model for integrated (rather than layered) learning, supervision, etc.
- Pilot programs (to develop and test innovation): voluntary, clear purposes, small scale, evaluation with feedback loop, sharing results, and supporting replication

B. Technology use

- Web: (1) pilot and publish child development results, (2) use for marketing, (3) use for blended learning and learning community forums
- Educate and engage training staff in a variety of training modalities
- Explore what other states are doing re: training strategies