

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:

- 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 531, Raleigh, NC 27699-2412, State Courier: 56-20-25, (Teresa.Turner@ncmail.net, 919/733-7672).

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>

Although the child welfare training system in North Carolina is extensive, the NC Division of Social Services and the members of its Family Support and Child Welfare Services Statewide Training Partnership are always interested in making training more accessible, effective, and cost-efficient, both for the state and for county agencies. For this reason, North Carolina has begun to venture into e-learning.

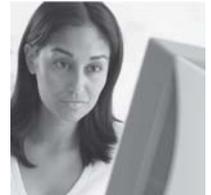
E-learning, or the delivery of education using the Internet and other distance technologies, is an increasingly popular approach that offers many benefits to learners and their organizations.

On the Rise

E-learning is on the rise in North Carolina. Between 1999 and 2003 the number of web-based courses offered by the North Carolina Community College system increased from approximately 9,500 to over 83,000. According to John Bailey, Director, Office of Educational Technology at the U.S. Department of Education, "Distance education is both a sign of the times and a harbinger of the future delivery of education services" (Parker, et al. 2004).

Indications are that the quality of e-learning courses is high and will continue to improve. A survey of college administrators (including presidents and chief academic officers) indicated that one-third of the roughly 1,000 survey respondents expect the quality of online courses at their institutions to surpass that of in-class courses within three years. Fifty-seven percent said the quality of web-based classes already rivals that of in-class teaching (Parker, et al. 2004). Experts also expect a growth in blended e-learning models

that involve a combination of classroom time and various technologies (e.g., web sites, discussion boards, listservs, teleconferencing, and video conferencing) (Welsh, et al. 2003).



Benefits

E-learning offers the potential for reducing classroom time, travel time, and travel costs: these are variable costs typically borne by local agencies. In fact, most of the cost benefits of e-learning accrue to learners' organizations, not the training organization (Rosenberg, 2001). Cost savings are further multiplied by the number of learners served, the extent to which learners are geographically dispersed, and the number of training events they attend (Welsh, et al. 2003).

This issue of *Training Matters* will give you some key details about the e-learning that is currently available to North Carolina's child welfare staff and how to make the most of these learning opportunities.

NC's E-Learning Offerings for Child Welfare Staff

- *Child Development in Families at Risk*. Fully online course (12 credit hrs.).
- *Child Welfare in North Carolina: Pre-Service Curriculum for New Workers and Supervisors*. Blended course (72 credit hrs.).
- *Supervisors Strengthening Staff Performance: Managing Transfer of Learning in the Work Place*. Blended course (30 credit hrs.).



ncswLearn.org: Gateway to E-Learning for NC's DSS Agencies

ncswLearn.org is the gateway web site through which child welfare services social workers and their supervisors can take online courses, find training events at a glance, apply online to register for training, track their training attendance history, update their own personnel information, and review which trainings are required, recommended, or elective for them based on their job functions.

To make the most of ncsWLearn.org you must create an account on the site. Here's how:

Creating Your Account

Note: To create an account on ncsWLearn.org you must have a work e-mail address.

1. Go to <<http://www.ncswLearn.org>>
2. Click "Create a User Account" under the "New Users" heading on the left-hand side of the screen.
3. Search for your information profile in the system. Do this by entering your first and last name and clicking on the "Search for My Information" button. A list of names will appear.
4. If your name is NOT shown, click the "I'm Not Listed Above" button to enter your personnel information and request an account.
5. If your personnel information IS found in the system, click "Select" next to the name that matches your information. You will be asked to verify your selection by entering your work e-mail address in the appropriate box. Click the "Verify My Information" button. If the site cannot verify your work e-mail address, please contact a web site administrator by clicking on the "Help" option in the menu at the top of the screen.

Finding and Registering for Training

Anyone can access ncsWLearn.org's online training calendar. Simply go to <ncswLearn.org> and click on the "Find a Training" button. Follow the menu that appears to find course descriptions and a schedule of course offerings.

However, to apply to register online for training events sponsored by the NC Division of Social Services you must have an account on ncsWLearn.org. Only staff members from North Carolina county departments of social services, state agencies, and private child-placing agencies are eligible to attend Division-sponsored training events.

If you meet these criteria, once you have found your desired training events you may add them to your registration cart. To view your registration cart and submit your applications for registration, click "My Registration Cart" on the left-hand side of the screen under "My PLP Options."

Individualized Training Assessment (ITA)

Once you have an account on ncsWLearn.org you will

have access to the Individualized Training Assessment, or ITA. The ITA is a tool to help county DSS child welfare supervisors and workers identify and prioritize their training needs. It allows you to:

- Identify your training needs based on current job responsibilities.
- Find your highest priority trainings.
- Get a list of your required, recommended, and elective courses offered by the Division.
- Provide an overview of your training expectations to your supervisors and administrators.

The ITA is divided into two parts. **Part A** (Training Requirement) provides a comprehensive list of your required, recommended, and elective trainings based on your job function. **Part B** (Self-Assessment) pinpoints your training interests and priorities and allows you to identify a shorter list of trainings tailored specifically to your needs. Through Part B, users assess themselves in terms of a specific set of competencies (knowledge and skills related to job function). This assessment, which takes approximately 15 minutes, generates a list of recommended trainings based on your responses and your training history. You can apply to register for training directly from your ITA report.

Note: Part B of the ITA is currently available only to county DSS supervisors of child welfare social workers. However, in spring 2008 the ITA will be available to all county DSS child welfare workers in North Carolina.

View Your Training History

Once you have an account at ncsWLearn.org you can also use the site's Personalized Learning Portfolio (PLP) to review your training attendance history. Simply log on and click the "Training Attendance History" button on the left-hand side of your screen.

County Training Manager Resources

If your county DSS has a designated staff development manager or a training coordinator, he or she can use this section of ncsWLearn.org to assess the child welfare training needs of the child welfare staff in your entire agency. To gain access to this new feature your agency's staff development or training coordinator will need to contact ncsWLearn.org's web administrator by clicking on the "Help" option in the menu at the top of the screen and requesting access rights.



Create an account with ncsWLearn.org today and begin taking full advantage of the features available to you!



Blended Pre-Service Training

by Ginger Caldwell, Program Consultant/Trainer, NC Division of Social Services

Pre-Service training—its formal title is *Child Welfare in North Carolina*—is a mandatory course that has been preparing line workers and supervisors for child welfare work in North Carolina since 1998.

Prior to September 2007, Pre-Service was a 12-day, face-to-face classroom course. Now Pre-Service is a “blended” course. This means face-to-face classroom experiences are combined with online learning experiences. Blended Pre-Service integrates 11 face-to-face classroom days with approximately 6 hours of online content delivered through self-paced online modules and live online experiences.

Blended Pre-Service is the result of collaboration between the NC Division of Social Services and the Jordan Institute for Families at the UNC-Chapel Hill School of Social Work.

Why Create a Blended Pre-Service?

Several factors contributed to the decision to provide Pre-Service in a blended format. First, one of the objectives of the NC Statewide Training Partnership for 2005-2010 is to “incorporate technology and e-learning into the learning system.” Second, some managers and county DSS directors expressed an interest in alternatives to the traditional format of Pre-Service, especially those that would save travel expenses and allow new staff to spend more time in the agency. Through the blended approach, county DSS staff can participate in a portion of Pre-Service training using a computer in their local agency.

Other ways county DSS staff benefit from the blended Pre-Service training include: increased flexibility regarding when they take the self-paced online portions of Pre-Service, the option of reviewing the online content at any point (even after the course has ended), and exposure to

a variety of instructional approaches designed to meet the individualized learning needs of participants.

Is the Content the Same?

Yes. The blended Pre-Service training continues to focus on current North Carolina child welfare policy and practice issues. Topics that were formerly discussed in the classroom but are now explored online include the structure of North Carolina’s child welfare system, policy and practice resources located on the Division’s website, and the role of collaboration in child welfare work in our state.

Is the Blended Pre-Service Working?

The training is going smoothly, thanks to the collaborative efforts of county DSS information technology (IT) staff, supervisors of Pre-Service training participants, ncswLearn.org website administrative staff, and trainers from the Division’s Staff Development Team.

County IT staff members play a key role by making sure Pre-Service participants’ computers have what they need to access the online

portions of the training. Supervisors help ensure workers have “protected time” and support for participating in online coursework.

Website staff and NCDSS trainers are available to answer questions about accessing and participating in the online portion of Pre-Service.

Is this Course Being Evaluated?

Yes. We want to make Pre-Service training the best it can be.

After the blended Pre-Service was piloted in April 2007, the course was revised to incorporate feedback from pilot participants. Today the Division continues to gather feedback and suggestions through classroom Participant Satisfaction Forms (PSFs), surveys, and focus groups. This information will be reviewed and incorporated in future revisions.

How Do I Register?

For course times or to register for *Child Welfare in North Carolina* please visit www.ncswLearn.org.



Ginger Caldwell

Outline of NC’s Blended Pre-Service Training

Week 1: Four classroom training days

Week 2: Self-paced online component (4-6 hours) plus three classroom training days

Week 3 (Experiential Learning Week): At their agencies participants continue online self-paced and engage in live online components and transfer of learning activities

Week 4: Four classroom training days

Self-Paced Online Work. Participants are encouraged to begin working on the self-paced online material during Week 2. Tasks include taking online modules, making workbook entries, and responding to discussion forum questions. This portion of the training must be completed the day before class begins in Week 4.

Live Online Session. Occurs during Week 3. During this session participants learn to navigate the NCDSS website, find and use the policy manual, and locate other pertinent policy and practice resources. A live online “tech check” preparation session ensures participants are prepared to engage in live online learning.

A New Blended Course for Supervisors

Supervisors Strengthening Staff Performance: Managing Transfer of Learning in the Work Place is a new, five-day, blended learning course for child welfare supervisors. The course consists of four days in the classroom and the equivalent of one day online.



Focus on Learning Transfer

This course seeks to enhance the transfer of classroom learning into the workplace. The training focuses on individual, team, and organizational learning; addresses challenges faced by supervisors; and gives participants opportunities to plan and implement transfer of learning activities in their work units.

During this course trainers provide frameworks for exploring effective transfer of learning, including adult learning theory, organizational learning processes, and the role of supervisors in promoting transfer of learning. Participants have the opportunity to identify barriers to effective transfer of learning and to work in small groups to devise strategies to address these barriers. Each participant develops a plan for transfer of learning in his or her work unit and implements this plan after each training session.

The Online Session

Upon enrollment, participants are assigned to an online Discussion Forum located on www.ncswLearn.org. Participants are expected to actively engage in online discussions between the first and second classroom sessions. Participants **MUST** complete online work to receive course credit. Those unable to complete online work should not plan to attend the training.

Other Details

This course is open to child welfare supervisors employed in a North Carolina county department of social services or individuals or agencies contracting with county DSS agencies to provide child welfare services. (Does not include staff from private foster care/adoption agencies or private residential care agencies).

This course is recommended for all child welfare supervisors who have responsibility for managing, monitoring, and improving the performance of social work staff.

Prerequisites: None. Contact Hours: 30 hours. Developed by Resources for Change, Inc. and One Plus One, Inc.

Supervisor Resources on ncswLearn.org

The “Supervisor Resources” section of ncswLearn.org allows **county DSS** supervisors to manage all aspects of training related to their employees. Through this area of the site supervisors are able to:

- Use “Employee Management” to:
 - Add information about an employee who is not currently in the training system
 - Edit personnel information for employees who are currently in the training system
- Register their employees for training:
 - Use the “Search for Training Events” option to quickly find upcoming training events, or use the “Training Calendar” or “Training Catalogue” options for a different view of upcoming training events
 - Once they have created their employees’ registration applications, supervisors can use the “Employee Registration Cart” to submit registration applications for all their employees at once
- View their employees’ training schedules and cancel registrations as needed
- View the training attendance history of their employees
- View their employees’ Individualized Training Assessments (ITA)

Use the options presented on the left-hand side of the screen to perform the tasks listed above. Note that these options are very similar to those in the Personalized Learning Portfolio (PLP), but are customized specifically to your employees. Use the PLP to register yourself for trainings, view your training attendance history, etc.

What’s the Difference Between Synchronous and Asynchronous Online Learning?

Synchronous online learning happens in real time and is facilitated by one or more instructors. This type of learning is often referred to as “live online” learning. All participants are logged on simultaneously and communicate directly with each other, either via microphone (or telephone conference line), via a shared “whiteboard,” by typing messages to each other (chat), or through some combination of these methods.

Asynchronous refers to a type of online learning in which the learner decides when to “log in” to the course and determines the pace of the coursework. Asynchronous courses do not occur in “real time” and can be totally self-paced without an instructor or they can be instructor-facilitated with timeframes identified for completion of the course.

ncswLearn.org Q & A

I am trying to create an account with ncsWLearn.org, but when I select my name and enter the e-mail address the system generates an error message. What should I do?

This happens either because (1) the e-mail address we have for you in the system does not match the e-mail address you are entering to create your account or (2) the system does not have an e-mail address for you. To remedy the situation, go to the ncsWLearn.org home page and click on the “Help” button located on the menu bar to contact a web site administrator. When prompted, send us an e-mail describing your situation. We will update your e-mail address in the system and let you know when you will be able to resume creating your account.

How can I find available courses using ncsWLearn.org?

Go to the ncsWLearn.org home page. Click on the button “Finding a Training” located on the top menu bar. You can search for training three different ways:

- To see what courses are available on a specific day, week or month, click on “Training Calendar”
- To search for a specific course or all courses, click on “Training Catalog”
- To find training events for a specific date, city, or county, click on “Search for Training Events”

You don’t need to log in to ncsWLearn.org to search for a course. However, you must be logged in to submit a registration application.

Is it safe to send personal information to ncsWLearn.org?

Yes. All data sent to and from the site is encrypted.

What should I do if, during an e-learning course, I am unable to view the videos, hear the course narration, or the pages do not look quite right?

Please make sure that the computer you are using meets the technical requirements described on this page. If you cannot hear the course narration, check the volume controls on your external speakers, within Windows, and within your media player.

I am taking an e-learning course and the web pages and/or videos are taking a long time to appear on my screen.

Web speed is directly related to how your agency is connected to the Internet. Please contact your agency’s Information Technology staff. They may be able to address problems with connection speeds.

I am taking an e-learning course and the web page to access the videos is not listing the videos I need to watch. What should I do?

The videos in the e-learning courses are all hosted on a Flash Media Server. This server streams the videos using port 1935 TCP. It is possible that the firewall attached to your network is blocking port 1935, thus preventing our Flash Media Server from delivering these videos to your

computer. The solution is to ask the person who administers your network to unblock port 1935.

I am having a technical problem but would prefer to speak to someone rather than sending an e-mail. Who should I contact?

If you have questions regarding technical issues, please contact your agency’s Information Technology staff. If your IT staff requires more information or help, please ask them to contact ncsWLearn.org’s web administrator via the Help section of the website.

I am taking an e-learning course via ncsWLearn.org that requires posting answers to a Discussion Forum. I posted my answer, but it did not go through the system. Did I miss a step?

Like many web sites, ncsWLearn.org has a built-in security feature that automatically logs users off after a certain period of inactivity. Unfortunately, the typing you do while composing a discussion forum post is not detected by our web site. To avoid losing your work, if your post on the Discussion Forum appears to be taking a while for you to compose, we recommend that you type up the post in a program such as Microsoft Word, then copy and paste the post into the Discussion Forum thread.



Computer Requirements

To participate in the online child welfare courses offered through the NC Division of Social Services, participants **must** use a computer with the following:



- A unique e-mail address (used only by the worker)
- Broadband Internet access
- Internet Explorer Web browser (version 6.0 or higher); Firefox or Mozilla will also work
- Adobe/Macromedia Flash (version 9.0) and Java Web Start (version 1.4)
- Speaker and/or headset: depending on where you will be taking the online course (e.g., shared office, a public computer lab) a headset may help you avoid disturbing others
- A microphone or mic/headset combo is needed to participate in live online sessions (e.g., blended Pre-Service Training)

The Division encourages participants to contact the Information Manager at their agency for assistance if they have questions about these requirements.

Child Development Course Now Fully Online

The course *Child Development in Families at Risk*, which all county DSS professionals employed in the area of child welfare must take within their first year of employment, is now available exclusively in an online learning format. It is no longer offered as a classroom-based course. The fully online version of this course has three components:

1. Sound and System Check (live online session).

A required one-hour "sound and system check" session introduces participants to the live online learning experience several days before the course starts. This session confirms that participants can access and participate in the course, answers any technical questions, and gives participants a chance to practice using their microphones, which they must have to participate in a live online session. We recommend that your agency's Information Technology (IT) person is present, available, or has checked your equipment prior to this session.

2. Foundation (live online session)

Course content is delivered during a 2.5 hour live online session. Foundation information about temperament, parenting styles, and positive attachment is presented and participants apply what they learn to a case study. The presenter also gives an overview of the "self-paced" online session of the course. Participants will have opportunities throughout the training to receive learner support.

3. Self-Paced (online session).

After the live online session, participants have approximately one month to complete the self-paced online session of the course. This

material focuses in more detail on child development theory, milestones, and practice, as well as the effects of abuse, neglect, and trauma on child development. New research in the areas of brain development and resiliency are also explored and actual case studies are used to practice developmental assessments, family-centered practice, and case planning. Participants are required to take online modules, interact with other participants through an online Discussion Forum, watch videos, and complete an online Knowledge Assessment. This portion of the course requires approximately 8-10 hours of online work.

To take *Child Development*, participants must have a microphone for their computers and meet the technical requirements outlined on page 4.

This course includes a workbook that participants receive via U.S. mail before the course begins. After successfully completing all three of the course components participants receive a certificate in the mail.

Child Development in Families at Risk, which is sponsored by the NC Division of Social Services, was developed by the Family and Children's Resource Program, part of the Jordan Institute for Families at the UNC-Chapel Hill School of Social Work.

For course times or to register for *Child Development in Families at Risk* please visit www.ncswLearn.org.



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