

Training **MATTERS**



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

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- N.C. Division of Social Services
- N.C. Association of County Directors of Social Services
- Appalachian Family Innovations at Appalachian State University
- Independent Living Resources, Inc.
- N.C. State University Department of Social Work
- N.C. A & T State University Social Work Program
- Resources for Change, Inc.
- UNC-Chapel Hill School of Social Work (Jordan Institute for Families)
- UNC-Chapel Hill School of Medicine
- UNC-Greensboro Department of Social Work

We Want To Hear from You!

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Visit Our Website

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

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

Learn More about Working with Parents with Cognitive Limitations

Ensuring the safety, permanence, and well-being of children whose parents have cognitive limitations can be a real challenge. This is especially true for child welfare workers unfamiliar with this area of practice. In the face of this challenge, these workers and their supervisors often wish for practice-relevant information and training courses on this topic. Sadly, these resources can be hard to find.

No Courses

Over the years people have developed courses specifically about working with parents who have cognitive limitations. However, these courses are not currently offered to North Carolina's child welfare workers. Practitioners might find portions of existing courses for professionals working in the fields of developmental dis-

abilities or early intervention useful, but for various reasons access to these courses can be limited.

Other Resources

If you know where to look, however, it is possible to find resources on this subject. In fact, child welfare workers and their agencies owe it to parents with cognitive disabilities and their children to seek this information out. The following resources are an excellent place to start developing your expertise:

Developmentaldisability.org. Sponsored by the Social Work Program at the Metropolitan State College of Denver, Colorado, this site offers information about "Working with Families with Children/Parents with Development Disabilities," a training curriculum for child welfare workers and other helping *continued* →

Featured Resource: SUPPORTED-PARENTING.COM

If you serve parents with cognitive limitations, visit www.supported-parenting.com. This site, developed by Tim and Wendy Booth, researchers with the Parents with Learning Difficulties Research Programme at the University of Sheffield in England, advocates a principled approach to helping families headed by parents with developmental disabilities. It also provides a wealth of information and practical suggestions for child welfare workers and other helping professionals who serve this population.

Though this site features many of the Booths' excellent articles, of greatest interest to child welfare workers will be the links to pages about good and bad practice, key lessons from research, parental competence, and risk and resilience in children whose parents have cognitive limitations. Supported-parenting.com also features links to quotations and photo essays by parents that express the things they value most in their lives.



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professionals. For information on acquiring this curriculum, contact Virginia Cruz (303/556-4464; VCruz@DevelopmentalDisability.org). For sample handouts, go to <www.developmentaldisability.org/Hand%20Outs.htm>.

“A Fair Chance.” Developed as part of the above-mentioned curriculum, this video takes you inside the homes and lives of six parents with developmental disabilities. It focuses on what helps them succeed and which factors seem to contribute to the placement of their children. “A Fair Chance” offers a frank discussion of the prejudices faced by parents with development disabilities and the support services they have found effective. To learn more, visit <www.developmentaldisability.org/parents_with_disabilities.htm>. Cost: \$140 (includes shipping and tax). To order, call 303/556-4464.

HELP: When the Parent Has Disabilities (1999). Edited by Stephanie Parks. This is a handbook professionals can use to help parents with cognitive limitations and other disabilities promote the healthy development of their children. It explains, for example, how to teach a mother with mental retardation a behavioral management program for her child. Cost: \$32.95/ea. Visit <www.vort.com/profb3.htm> to order.

Parents with Special Needs/Mental Retardation: A Handbook for Early Intervention (1990).

By Marilyn Espe-Sherwindt and colleagues at Project CAPABLE in Cincinnati. Although written for early interventionists, the practical, family-centered suggestions in this handbook make it an excellent resource for child welfare workers. Can be borrowed by North Carolina child welfare workers through the NC Early Intervention Library (828/432-5267; ncei.library@ncmail.net). To browse library holdings, visit <www.ncei-eelibrary.org>.

Cultivating Competence: Directory and Resource Guide on Supported Parenting, 2nd Edition (2000). Edited by Dolores Ullmer Liamba. Of special interest to child welfare workers will be the articles “Guiding Principles for Supporting Families Headed by Parents with Cognitive Limitations,” “Discovering the Parent’s Language of Learning,” and a list of suggested readings. Published by the Wisconsin Council on Developmental Disabilities. Available online <wccd.org/Publications/cultivating_competence.pdf>.



For a listing of additional articles and books about working with parents with cognitive limitations, see the references section of *Children’s Services Practice Notes*, v. 9, n. 2 <www.practicenotes.org>.

Training in Support of MRS

The Multiple Response System, an effort to make child welfare services in North Carolina more family-centered, consistent, and effective, is coming your way. MRS, which began in ten counties in August 2002, expanded to an additional 42 counties this fall. Today more than half our counties are implementing or getting ready to implement the seven strategies of MRS. The rest will be on board with MRS in 2005.

Though it is ultimately rewarding, making the switch to MRS can be a challenge. That’s why the NC Division of Social Services is providing the following specialized training to MRS counties:

- **MRS Policy Roadshow.** In November, December, and January, representatives from the Division will hold 23 MRS policy training sessions at 19 locations across North Carolina. These sessions provide crucial information about MRS, especially the use of the family assessment response. The Division strives to hold these events at convenient locations, so agencies will not have to expend extra resources to attend.

- **Cornerstones of Family-Centered Practice.** This multi-course series is designed to provide the information and skill practice workers and supervisors need to implement MRS. A key component of this series is *Cornerstone 3: Partners in Change, a New Perspective on CPS*, which is open only to child welfare workers in MRS counties. The supervisory training *Cornerstone 2: What’s Good for Families is Good for Workers*, is open to child welfare and Work First program administrators, program managers, and supervisors in all 100 counties. Consult the spring 2004 training calendar for training times and locations (see www.dhhs.state.nc.us/dss/childrenservices/training/index.htm).

Directors, supervisors, and workers in MRS counties should be on the lookout for information from the Division about times and locations of MRS-related training. For more general information about MRS, visit <www.dhhs.state.nc.us/dss/childrenservices/mrs/index.htm>.