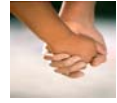




# Iowa Department of Human Services

## Social Worker Training

### CFSR Systemic Factor Bulletin



*Training provides the framework for supporting staff in building their skills to be confident professionals helping families achieve safety, permanency and well-being.*

April 2008

**Where we were then:** The 2003 Child and Family Service Review determined that Iowa was not in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Training. Although the CFSR determined that the State has a well-conceptualized and broad pre-service training curriculum for caseworkers, the training system was not functioning, as it should. Specifically, the ability of caseworkers to participate in training in a timely manner was compromised due to reductions in the frequency of offering the training and the high caseloads that caseworkers carry. Furthermore, in the absence of a functioning quality assurance system, the agency is reliant on front-line supervisors to ensure quality casework, but no training is provided to assist them in this task. In addition, the CFSR found that opportunities for ongoing training are not readily available because of the 75 percent reduction in the agency's budget allocated for training. Despite these concerns, the CFSR found that pre-service and ongoing training for foster and adoptive parents are perceived as being of high quality and readily accessible.

**Where we are now:** Funding has been increased since the budget crisis for state government in 2003, which significantly affected our training program. Effort and strategies have been implemented so that training

- introduces, clarifies and reinforces the agency's clinical practice model
- introduces, clarifies and reinforces the importance of initial and ongoing family assessment throughout the life of a case, particularly at points of transition
- introduces and reinforces the value of and ways of facilitating the family's involvement in service planning.
- delivers a coherent message to all partners.
- provides supervisors with training in the clinical, administrative and education aspects of their jobs.

The State continues to maintain a well-conceptualized and broad pre-service and ongoing training curriculum for caseworkers. The requirement to have training before cases are assigned to a new worker has been reinforced with procedural requirements for pre-service training. The pre-service and ongoing offerings now adequately meet the need for training new and ongoing workers. Caseloads that caseworkers carry have significantly decreased [since 2006, reduced child welfare caseloads from 51 to 30 per worker] so the ability of caseworkers to participate in training in a timely manner has improved. Iowa now has a functioning quality assurance system and there is a strong feedback-loop between training, supervision, and quality assurance. Quality Assurance has a strong representation on the training committee and QA Coordinators have met with the Social Work Administrators quarterly to provide a continual feedback loop focused on practice and results. In each of

the eight service areas, Iowa has also recognized that supervisors are the key to practice improvement. A grant from our federal partners specifically addressed the need for supervisors to have regular training options, as well as, training that focuses on their skills to provide quality clinical supervision. Pre-service and ongoing training for foster and adoptive parents are of high quality and readily accessible.

#### Expectations:

Focus groups conducted during the 2009 CFSR on-site review will evaluate how effective the State is in providing and ensuring completion of adequate *initial and ongoing* training for all staff who provide child welfare services. The expectation is that we are providing:

- Requirements for pre-service or initial training for State child welfare staff prior to caseworkers receiving a caseload and Service Area Administrators are monitoring this requirement.
- Initial and ongoing training that addresses the skills and knowledge base needed by staff to perform their jobs, including covering topics and issues that may be unique to particular areas or caseloads.
- Sufficient training or mentoring on an ongoing basis.
- Ensure that staff are able to access required trainings.
- Ensure a strong feedback-loop between training, supervision, and quality assurance

#### Iowa DHS Training Formats and Hour Requirements:

##### *Social Workers*

- New social workers have five day basic foundation training before case assignment. Initial training combines face to face training with on the job training modules and ongoing mentoring over 12 months.
- Minimum of 24 hours child welfare training annually after initial 12 months with the Iowa Department of Human Services Ongoing training is provided in a variety of formats:
  - o Local training such as the safety training with providers,
  - o Distance learning delivered training via the Iowa Communications Network and
  - o Face to face training on such topics such as ICWA and Assessments.
  - o Technology and on-line training modules via the New Worker Guidebook.

##### *Service Supervisors*

- Minimum of 24 hours child welfare/ supervisory training annually.

#### Link to listing of required training:

[\\Hoorv3s1\OFS.771\CORELIST\CALENDAR\Required\\_training\\_08](\\Hoorv3s1\OFS.771\CORELIST\CALENDAR\Required_training_08)



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**Monitoring Training:** Supervisors and Service Area Managers monitor to ensure initial training is provided before case assignments. Training is documented and monitored via the Iowa Interagency Training System, (IITS System) The shortcut above goes to the link to view how to access the IITS system to view your training



records. [Shortcut to View Only Guide.Ink](#)

**Training evaluations and surveys:** Electronic evaluations are sent to participants after training for feedback to make ongoing improvements. Learning Needs Surveys are conducted with experienced staff to determine advance level course needs.

#### Strengths of Our Training System:

- A statewide representative training committee ensures that training is adequate, effective and relevant to DHS staff by providing recommendations and feedback to the training office and helping to develop and review curriculum.
- Frequency of training
- Comprehensive guidebook for new staff
- Basic courses specific to each job classification
- Courses adapted on an ongoing basis to incorporate changes
- Monitoring of training completion
- Training developed by field staff committee (e.g. safety/risk training)
- Training expectations clearly identified, outlined and communicated to staff
- Key topics addressed: DV, substance abuse, sexual abuse, etc.
- Timely new policy and practice training
- Ability to attend conferences such as the Coalition Conference; St Luke's Child Protection Conference, etc.

#### Addressing Training Improvements:

- To provide more diverse training options, the following training has been implemented:
  - Monthly distance learning opportunities e.g. [Bureau calls, access to NRC distance learning]
  - CFSR Practice Bulletins as a guide to supervisor monthly training of staff
  - Advanced training for workers and advanced learning courses for supervisors included tuition reimbursement for graduate college courses

**Practice Tips for Supervisors:** Continued learning directly improves worker competencies and positive child and family outcomes.

- Supervisors can make training more effective by setting the stage for effective learning. They can proactively and positively support learning activities and follow-up after the class to assist in the transfer of learning.
- Limit interruptions during training or learning sessions to emergency only so the learner concentrates on the learning and does not miss key knowledge.
- Classroom training builds the foundation of knowledge that needs continued coaching and mentoring at the worksite to develop the learner's competency from beginner through proficient to expert. Time and experience are necessary for a learner to develop full competencies.
- Training can be identified as an effective and informed strategy of the annual EDPD.
- A yearly training plan should be developed in partnership with all learners for continued growth. Anticipating learning needs prevents worker frustration and can allow you to proactively deal with workers skill needs; not after a problem has developed.
- A variety of learning activities, besides classroom training, help develop workers practice skills. Clinical consultation is a powerful tool for supervisors to shape and develop practice skills. Going on a child visit or parent visit with a worker allows you to demonstrate higher-level skills. Demonstration coupled with shadowing and/or mentoring, can teach workers complex engagement and assessment skills most effectively and increase the learner's experience and knowledge base.
- Your attitude about training can affect how ready a worker is for the training and ultimately the worker's continued competencies. Encourage development of an active learning style with advance preparation including reviewing objectives, asking questions at training and clarifying local practice with supervisor after classroom learning.
- Encourage worker utilization of on-line learning resources for review before and after training.
- Develop team learning by forming and participating in learning discussion or groups at regularly scheduled staff meetings or lunch and learns.

\* **Definition of Blended learning** - Is an optimum blend of self study, instructor-led events, and group collaboration each deployed in a blend of asynchronous (directed study) or synchronous (real time learning) modes appropriate to the learning

Iowa DHS training uses a **Blended Learning\*** format with the **New Social Worker Guidebook** and the **New Social Worker Monitoring Checklist** guiding the social worker's learning. Feedback is sent to the new worker and supervisor after the introductory course and shadowing and journaling are part of the self-directed on the job transfer of learning strategies. Link to the Guidebook and Checklist: [\\Hoopr3s1\QFS.771\CORELIST\New\\_SW\\_Guidebook\\_2007-08](http://Hoopr3s1\QFS.771\CORELIST\New_SW_Guidebook_2007-08)