



The Comprehensive, Competency-Based Inservice Training System

Program Components and Implementation Activities

MISSION: To promote the delivery of high quality, family- centered, culturally-competent child welfare services to abused and neglected children and their families by assuring that staff in the child welfare system are properly trained.

GOAL: To develop, implement, and maintain a Comprehensive, Competency-Based Inservice Training System for Child Welfare Administrators, Supervisors, Caseworkers, Foster Caregivers, and Service Support Staff.

STAFFING PATTERNS

Planning, implementation, and management of a competency-based inservice training system are performed collaboratively by training managers and representatives of the service system throughout the organization. These individuals are organized at three major levels.

The Central Management Organization (CMO) is responsible for statewide administration, coordination, and monitoring of all program activities, fiscal management, the development of training resources and products, and the provision of technical assistance to participants throughout the system. CMO staff should be professional trainers and training managers. The CMO is usually operated by the state agency. However, all or part of CMO functions may be contracted to an organization outside of the state system, such as a university or private agency, under the direction of the state agency. Centralized administration and development promotes standardization of products and procedures which promotes uniformity and consistency, assures a minimum standard of practice throughout the system, and prevents gaps in or duplication of development efforts.

The Regional Training Managers (RTM) are responsible for the collection and assessment of training needs data, and for designing and scheduling relevant training activities to meet the high priority needs of their constituents. Organization at the regional level promotes involvement of all trainees in assessing their own needs, facilitates attendance at training, provides immediate feedback to the system regarding the relevance and effectiveness of training activities, and minimizes costs for trainees to attend training.

The Central Steering Committee (CSC) is a permanent decision-making body that performs ongoing operational planning, management, monitoring, and evaluation of the training system. Its members represent all components of the child welfare training and service delivery system, including CMO staff, Regional Training Managers, state agency staff, local agency administrators and/or staff, and contracted components such as university representatives, where appropriate.

Objective #1:

ADOPT A UNIVERSE OF COMPETENCIES FOR EACH TARGETED TRAINING GROUP

Description: The Universe of Competencies is a compilation of all the knowledge and skills potentially needed by trainees in a target group to perform their assigned job tasks. The Universe of Competencies "drives" a competency-based inservice training system. The competencies are the criteria against which individual training needs are measured; they also determine the content of all training curricula. Trainers in the system are certified to teach only in those competency areas in which they have a high level of expertise and proficiency.

Action Steps:

- The Universe of Competencies for child welfare caseworkers, for child welfare supervisors/managers, and for foster caregivers have been developed and standardized. These should be reviewed and finalized, with any necessary revisions in wording or content to assure relevance to each jurisdiction.

Task Assignment: The updating or development of competencies is the responsibility of the CMO and its subcommittees. Formal review and adoption of competencies for the system is the responsibility of the Central Steering Committee (CSC).

Objective #2:

ALL NEW EMPLOYEES WILL ATTEND STANDARDIZED CORE TRAINING SHORTLY AFTER THEIR EMPLOYMENT IN THE SYSTEM.

Description: Core training consists of training in those competencies considered to be fundamental and essential for all trainees in a targeted trainee group. By mandating that all staff attend Core training early in their employment, the training system helps to assure a consistent and uniform standard of practice in the system.

Action Steps:

- Agency managers, supervisors, and line staff must understand the rationale for standardized Core training and its importance in a competency-based training system. Supervisors and managers must also be trained regarding their role and responsibility to assist their staff to transfer new knowledge and skills to the job after Core training.
- A standardized Core curriculum should be selected for each identified target group. IHS has developed Core curricula for child welfare caseworkers, for supervisors and managers, and for foster caregivers.
- Trainers to teach each of the identified Core modules must be identified, evaluated, certified, and trained to use the standardized curriculum modules.
- A system must be developed to provide training managers with information regarding all new employees as they enter the system.
- Core training must be scheduled on a regular basis sufficient to meet system needs. All newly hired staff should be able to complete Core training within 6 months of the date of employment. A training calendar announcing the scheduling of training should be disseminated to supervisors and managers throughout the system.
- Each new employee's supervisor must refer new staff to Core training workshops.
- Attendance by staff in Core workshops must be tracked by computer; permanent training records are kept for all employees.

Task Assignment: CMO coordinates and conducts the review and selection of Core curricula, and makes modifications as indicated by the CSC.

CSC approves standardized Core curricula for use within the system.

CMO and RTMs educate agency managers and staff regarding the importance of Core training in a competency-based training system.

CMO recruits, evaluates, selects, and develops trainers to teach Core modules.

RTMs gather data regarding new staff from constituent agencies and schedule Core training workshops accordingly.

RTMs input data regarding attendance at Core training into computer and establishes individual training records for all new staff.

Objective # 3:

ONGOING IDENTIFICATION OF TRAINING NEEDS FOR ALL STAFF IN THE SYSTEM

Description: The Individual Training Needs Assessment (ITNA) process determines the high priority training needs for every staff person in the system. Each ITNA instrument contains the standardized Universe of Competencies for that target group. The ITNA weighs the relative importance of two variables; the importance of each competency to the individual worker's job, and the worker's current level of ability. The highest priority training need is a competency which is very important to the worker's job, and in which the worker has little knowledge or skill.

The ITNA should be completed at least annually by the staff member and his/her supervisor. The supervisor uses ITNA data to develop the individual training plan for the worker. Supervisors send training needs data to the Regional Training Managers, who enter the data into the computerized tracking system. Regional Training Managers use compiled training needs data to plan appropriate training programs for the region.

Central Management uses the compiled training needs data from throughout the system to identify current high priority competencies to drive trainer and curriculum development. ITNA data must be updated continuously to accurately reflect changes in training needs.

Action Steps:

- Agency supervisors and managers must be trained in the proper use of the ITNA. The difference between the ITNA and employee performance appraisal must be clearly understood to promote accurate identification of training need, to prevent using training to solve non-training problems, and to minimize resistance to using the instrument.
- Regional Training Managers provide ongoing support to agency managers and staff to assure that the ITNA is properly used and that data is submitted in a timely manner.
- Regional Training Managers enter all ITNA information into the computerized data tracking system; training needs reports are generated.
- Regional Training Managers use ITNA data to plan training activities that are appropriate to meet the current high priority training needs of the region.
- Central Manager assures that sufficient, properly-trained trainers and appropriate training curricula are identified or developed to meet the system's high priority needs.

Task Assignment: Central Steering Committee formally adopts ITNA instrument for statewide use, containing the finalized Universe of Competencies for the targeted training group,

Central Manager assists Regional Training Managers to develop and implement training for agency managers and staff regarding proper use of ITNA.

Regional Training Managers monitor the process of data collection, enter ITNA data into the computerized tracking system, generate report of high priority needs, and plan training that addresses these needs.

Central manager monitors the ITNA process and uses data to identify or develop trainers and curricula for the needed competency areas.

Objective #4:

A SYSTEM WILL BE DEVELOPED FOR THE ONGOING RECRUITMENT, EVALUATION, SELECTION, AND TRAINING OF TRAINERS

Description: Trainers in a competency based training system must have well developed training skills for use with adult learners; a thorough knowledge and skill in the topics they are to teach; and understanding of the values, standards, and operations of state-of-the-art child welfare practice.

Trainers for a competency-based system are thoroughly screened, evaluated, and ultimately certified to teach only in those competency areas in which they demonstrate a high level of proficiency. They are trained in adult learning methodology and in the use of standardized curricula. They are also trained regarding their role in promoting transfer of training from the workshop to the job setting.

All trainers are evaluated each time they conduct a session. If the trainer fails to perform to the system's standard, CMO and RTM staff provide the necessary technical assistance to help the trainer improve performance. Trainers must meet system standards in order to be allowed to train. This function assures that training remains of the highest quality.

The diversity of content areas to be trained in a child welfare training system makes the use of contract rather than full-time trainers the most efficient and cost-effective strategy, particularly for non-Core topics.

Action Steps:

- CMO sets up a standardized system of trainer recruitment, screening, interviewing and assessment, certification, and evaluation of trainers. Certified trainers are entered into the centralized data tracking system. CMO schedules and provides Training of Trainers in topics such as presentation skills, curriculum development, group facilitation skills, and cultural diversity. CMO staff, assisted by RTMs, provide ongoing technical assistance to trainers in the trainer pool.

- Regional Training Managers use data from computerized data base to identify trainers who are certified to teach in the competency areas needed by the region. Regional Training Managers contact trainers directly to schedule training. Regional Training Managers conduct on-site evaluations of trainers and provide information to CMO when trainer performance does not meet system standards. CMO staff monitor Core and other standardized workshops to assure quality and consistency in delivery.
- Regional Training Managers identify and at times, may certify trainers within the region, including staff from constituent child welfare agencies, related service agencies, university instructors, and private practitioners. The screening and certification process is standardized throughout the system.

Task Assignment: CMO develops and CSC approves standards for trainer performance.

CMO certifies and trains trainers, attempting to develop resources for all competency areas in the Universe of Competencies, and prioritizing development at any time for current high priority need areas. While RTMs may recommend trainers for Core and other standardized curricula, CMO should retain responsibility for certification and training of these trainers.

CMO schedules and manages referrals to Training of Trainer sessions; CMO provides formal training and ongoing technical assistance to trainers in topics related to curriculum development and training skill.

Regional Training Managers can certify trainers for specialized and related skills areas and can guide trainers to develop topics to address specified competencies. Regional managers provide evaluative feedback to trainers on site, and to the CMO.

Objective # 5:

A SYSTEM WILL BE IMPLEMENTED FOR THE ONGOING IDENTIFICATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF TRAINING CURRICULA.

Description: Ultimately, there should be training curricula available for all competencies in the Universe of Competencies. The identification, assessment, adaptation, updating, or development of relevant training curricula is an ongoing process for the life of the program.

Action Steps:

- Curriculum development specialists in the CMO research existing curriculum and training resources both within and outside the system, identify appropriate resources, and adapt or modify them to meet the system's need. At times, CMO curriculum specialists will have to develop training curricula where none exist.

- CMO provides technical assistance to trainers with content expertise in the formulation of their content into a standardized curriculum.

Task Assignment: Curriculum development is the responsibility of the curriculum development experts in the Central Management Organization, who either develop or supervise the development of curriculum modules for high priority competency areas.

CMO staff are assisted by subcommittees of the CSC, with ad hoc members assigned as appropriate. These members may include local agency managers and staff with expertise in the content area being developed, trainers certified to teach in the competency area, and other identified content experts.

Objective #6:

AN EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT SYSTEM WILL BE DEVELOPED FOR THE DELIVERY OF TRAINING WORKSHOPS.

Description: An effective training system for adult learners must involve learners in the needs assessment, training, and evaluation process. A regional delivery system assigns a training manager to a group of constituent agencies within a circumscribed geographic area to facilitate the planning of training that meets identified training needs in that area. A regional delivery system saves considerable resources by eliminating the need for trainees to travel long distances to training or to stay overnight.

Action Steps:

- CSC delineates administrative subdivisions of the training system, based upon geography and distribution of staff within the system.
- Regional Training Managers are assigned to manage a specified administrative subdivision and to represent their constituent agencies on the CSC.
- Regional Training Managers conduct site visits to establish collaborative relationships with the staff and managers in their constituent agencies or service units, to identify local and regional training needs, and to identify resources within the region.
- Regional Training Managers schedule training in locations that are convenient to trainees. They also identify training sites in constituent agencies and communities, enabling local agencies to "host" regional workshops.
- Regional Training Managers produce a formal, quarterly training calendar to announce scheduled workshops, manage registrations for all workshops, assure that equipment needs are met, produce handouts, conduct periodic on-site observation and personal evaluation of training, and issue certificates of attendance.

- Regional Training Managers provide feedback from trainees and from observation of training to the CMO for use in ongoing management of trainers and curriculum development. Regional Training Managers provide on-site technical assistance to trainers to help modify or adapt the training to address unique regional circumstances or needs.

Task Assignment: Regional Training Managers are responsible for the operations of their individual regions in order to assure that local/regional needs are adequately met.

Regional Training Managers implement standardized program components in accordance with procedures adopted by the CSC.

Central Management assures that adequate trainer and curriculum resources are available for use by Regional Managers in scheduling training to meet high priority needs.

Objective # 7:

A SYSTEM WILL BE IMPLEMENTED FOR THE ONGOING MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF ALL TRAINING ACTIVITIES AND PROGRAM COMPONENTS

Description: Use of a statewide data tracking system enables the systematic input of information needed to plan, administer, and evaluate training activities and staff participation. Measures of performance for the system must be identified, and the system's output is regularly assessed.

All training activities are routinely evaluated to determine their quality and relevance. Comprehensive data is maintained regarding individual staff attendance at training in order to identify compliance with training regulations.

Action Steps:

- A computerized administration and data tracking system, such as TrainTrack™, must be adopted or developed.
- CMO and each Regional Training Managers must have access to the data system for both data input and the generation of necessary reports.
- A standardized format for the evaluation of individual training workshops must be adopted.

- Plans for the ongoing evaluation of the system, including the identification of system objectives and performance measures, must be adopted. Performance data must be maintained, disseminated, and evaluated regularly.

Task Assignment: CSC adopts a computerized data tracking program for the training system and defines and approves performance measures for the system.

CMO monitors the use of the tracking system by the Regional Training Managers and assures that training needs and workshop data are complete and up-to-date. CMO provides data reports to the CSC for review and internal program evaluation.

Regional Training Managers input data locally and transfer data to the centralized data system. In smaller systems, it is often more efficient for statewide data to be input and maintained centrally by CMO data specialists.

Objective #8:

AN ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE WILL BE IMPLEMENTED THAT PROMOTES ONGOING AND COLLABORATIVE PLANNING, MANAGEMENT, AND EVALUATION OF ALL SYSTEM COMPONENTS.

Description: The Central Steering Committee (CSC), which is the representative planning and decision making body for the training system, is an essential component in assuring the ongoing effectiveness and quality of the training program. This group assures that strategic planning, operational planning, decision making, and program evaluation are routinely conducted by the most knowledgeable and committed people in the system. The representative nature of the group assures that all relevant information is considered before decisions are made and that all decisions consider the diverse needs and interests of constituent members. Conflicts are resolved by negotiation and collaborative planning. This team approach to management also maximizes buy-in from all parts of the system, and provides an administrative structure that is less vulnerable to political or staffing changes. When fully functioning, the team advocates for policy, procedural, and other changes in the service system to help achieve high practice standards.

A formal voting process is used to adopt standardized program procedures and components. However, negotiation is the expected method of problem resolution, and voting is generally for purposes of ratification rather than to resolve conflict and disagreements among members.

Much of the work of the program is conducted by standing subcommittees of the CSC. These subcommittees implement activities that address high system priorities, and can include: the establishment of operating procedures or policies; the development of curricula and other resources; the development of systems for program monitoring and evaluation; the development of strategies to engage and involve constituents in the training process; the development of strategies to implement new program components; and marketing and public relations. All subcommittees are staffed by the CMO, and members include representatives from all program components. Subcommittee recommendations must be formally approved by the CSC prior to implementation.

An annual strategic and operational plan is developed by the CSC in a formal retreat at the beginning of each program year. This plan assures that program activities address high priority problems and needs, and assures coordination of activities among all program components toward common goals and objectives.

The CSC is a management team, not an advisory committee, and persons from outside the training system should not be considered permanent members. The involvement of key players and stakeholders in the training program is often desirable, however, and the involvement of these persons may be formalized through Ad Hoc, non-voting membership and participation on appropriate subcommittees.

Action Steps:

- Early in the formation of the training system, members of the CSC should be identified, appointed to membership, and trained in the technology of managing a competency-based training system. Membership should include: CMO staff, Regional Training Managers, training developers, and state and local agency administrators.
- The CSC should meet monthly with formalized agendas for each meeting. Monthly meetings are used for operational planning. CMO facilitates and staffs these meetings.
- The CSC should meet annually in a strategic planning retreat to identify objectives and activities for system development and implementation for the coming year.
- The CSC develops a subcommittee structure that facilitates the development of new program components and the collaborative implementation of activities in the system.

Task Assignment: All participants in the training system are permanent members of the CSC and participate in all Committee meetings and functions. Other members are appointed as appropriate.

CMO staffs the meetings, sets the agenda with input from other members, facilitates meetings, and takes and distributes minutes.

RTMs provide input to the CSC from the staff and managers in their regions. Site visits and telephone communications are used to update regional constituents regarding issues and to gather data to inform CSC deliberations.

State and local agency managers provide information that assures that CSC decisions remain consistent with state policy, procedure, or rule. CSC members can provide the state agency with relevant information about systemic barriers to state-of-the-art practice in the system, can make recommendations for system change, and can provide assistance and support in implementing systemic changes.

Objective #9:

DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT STRATEGIES THAT PROMOTE TRANSFER OF LEARNING

Description: Transfer of Learning refers to trainees' utilization of knowledge and skills learned in training back on their jobs. Research suggests that without system-wide strategies that promote transfer, much of what is learned in training will never be used in the work place. Transfer of learning requires collaboration between training managers, trainers, the trainees, their immediate supervisors, and the administrators and managers in the work environment. Strategies to promote transfer are incorporated into activities that prepare the worker to attend training; that occur during the training itself, and that support the worker in utilizing new learning on their jobs after training.

Action Steps:

- The training system must design a plan to incorporate transfer of learning strategies into all training activities.
- Trainers must be trained to include strategies in their workshops that promote transfer. These may include experiential exercises, action planning, simulations, and identifying and trouble-shooting potential barriers to application of new learning on the job.
- Line supervisors must be trained to provide educational supervision to their staff, and specifically to promote transfer. These skills include using the ITNA to identify areas of knowledge and skill deficiency, job coaching, on-the-job training, communication and feedback, and helping staff identify and eliminate barriers to transfer. Line supervisors must be able to apply the fundamental child welfare practice concepts as trained in Child Welfare Caseworker Core training.

- Executives and administrators must understand their responsibility to eliminate organizational barriers to transfer of learning. These include policies and procedures that are inconsistent with "best practice" as learned in training; inadequate supervision; excessive workloads; and a non-supportive work environment.
- Trainees should be prepared to attend training by: reviewing ITNA data that identifies their training needs; identifying the competencies in which they need to be trained; and developing their learning expectations for a training workshop. Pre-tests are often useful in helping trainees better understand what they need to learn.

Task Assignment: The Steering Committee adopts system-wide policy related to transfer of learning, including training for supervisors and managers in content related to educational supervision and transfer of learning.

CMO and Regional Training Managers develop strategies to be used before, during, and after training to promote transfer.

Training system offers comprehensive overview of Caseworker Core training for line supervisors and managers. Similar overview can be provided for Supervisor/Manager Core for executives and managers who have not themselves completed this training.

CMO designs workshop for trainers on transfer of learning and how to integrate strategies into their training. CMO and Regional Training Managers work individually with trainers to help them apply concepts to their training.

Regional Training Managers work with supervisors and managers in local agencies or work areas to assist in implementation of transfer of learning strategies in the work place.

Objective #10:

PROMOTING SKILL ACQUISITION, MASTERY, AND PROFICIENCY

Description: Child welfare skills are quite complex. Proficiency in such activities as client engagement, family and risk assessment, case planning, and service intervention require an extensive knowledge base, excellent critical thinking skills, and specialized application of social work skills to the unique challenges of child welfare practice. Child welfare supervision requires a comparable continuum of knowledge and skills in competencies related to organizational development, management, and supervision in addition to casework practice competencies.

Formal inservice training workshops are the most effective and efficient means of imparting knowledge to large numbers of trainees, of furthering participants' understanding of concepts and issues, and of describing and modeling the application of this knowledge to direct practice. However, workshop training is not the most effective means of developing skills. Skill development requires a systematic progression of activities that include observation, modeling, practice, feedback, coaching, and reinforcement, often over an extended period of time. Skill building is most effectively conducted in skill-oriented seminars, practice sessions, case conferences, and through coaching, mentoring, and feedback during the course of daily work. However, skills training without the mastery of prerequisite knowledge and understanding is usually ineffective, and potentially dangerous.

To assure skill mastery and proficiency, the training system must design and implement a continuum of learning activities that incorporates educational supervision, on-the-job training, self-study, coaching, and mentoring in addition to formal workshop training. While some of these activities can be provided by training managers and trainers, other activities must be conducted by line supervisors. Agency managers must understand their own responsibility in promoting and supporting training if staff are to become proficient in job skills

Action Steps:

- The CSC must design a continuum of training and learning interventions appropriate for training competencies at different levels of learning (i.e. awareness, knowledge, understanding, practice application, and skill mastery.)
- The CSC must educate and engage agency administrators, supervisors, and staff to partner with training managers to develop and implement formal on-the-job training, coaching, and mentoring activities.
- The training system must identify a cadre of trainers and coaches who can design, implement, and evaluate on-the-job training interventions in a variety of key competency areas.
- Specialized training curricula must be developed for advanced-level skills training. Strategies can include learning laboratories, case conferences, small seminars, bridge-line telephone conferences, computer-based learning activities, reading, supervised self-study, and other interventions.

Task Assignment:

- The CSC spearheads the development of a long-range strategic plan and program design for skill building in the service system. The plan must be developed in collaboration with agency managers and supervisors.

- Training managers provide individual consultation to local service agencies and units to help them design and staff their on-the-job-training component in a manner that best suits their geography, staffing levels, and financial resources.
- The state agency allocates funds to pay trainers to serve in a coaching, mentoring, and on-the-job training role for trainees.
- The CMO works with agency managers to assure that individual training plans are developed for each learner in the system. These plans must include plans for formal training, transfer of learning, and skill building in needed competency areas.
- Line supervisors must prioritize their activities to enable them to provide educational supervision, or make arrangements for educational supervision by other agency or contract staff. Agency managers must reassign or delegate supervisors' administrative responsibilities to free supervisors' time for educational supervision.