

Table of Contents

| | | |
|------|---|----|
| I. | Introduction | 1 |
| II. | Overview of Training Needs Assessment | 2 |
| III. | Methodology | 3 |
| | Key Informant Interview | 3 |
| | Focus Groups..... | 4 |
| | Online Survey..... | 4 |
| | Literature Reviews..... | 5 |
| IV. | Demographic Characteristics of Participants | 7 |
| | Focus Groups Participants..... | 7 |
| | Online Survey Respondents | 7 |
| V. | Findings | 13 |
| | Key Informant Interview | 13 |
| | Focus Group Findings | 13 |
| | Summary of Findings from Focus Group..... | 16 |
| | Findings of Online Survey | 16 |
| VI. | Preliminary Analysis and Next Steps..... | 33 |
| VII. | Year II..... | 36 |
| | Appendices..... | 37 |
| | A. List of Probate Judges | 37 |
| | B. Adoption Section Focus Group Survey | 38 |
| | C. Probate Judges Focus Group Survey | 42 |
| | D. Online Survey Form..... | 44 |
| | Literature Reviews | 51 |

I. Introduction

As Contract Manager for The Ohio Child Welfare Training Program (OCWTP), the Institute for Human Services (IHS) is expected to “obtain ongoing input and feedback regarding adoption training from a diverse, representative group of individuals who attend the workshops.” Having completed six feedback studies on adoption training workshops over the past several years, IHS asked in August, 2003, permission from the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) to complete an assessment of national adoption practice trends and statewide training needs, rather than a seventh feedback study on adoption workshops. ODJFS authorized a two-year Adoption Training Assessment project in place of a feedback study. The goal of the assessment is to ascertain whether training for adoption workers in Ohio is keeping current with cutting-edge adoption practice and research.

In the state of Ohio, all adoption and foster care workers in public or private agencies or probate courts are required to complete a series of Adoption Assessor workshops. Ten workshops are organized into two tiers. Tier I Assessor Training, to be completed during the first six months of adoption or foster care practice, includes six workshops and 36 hours of training:

- *Family and Child Assessment* (2 days)
- *Birth Parent Services* (1 day)
- *Post Legalization Adoption Services* (1 day)
- *Adoption Assistance* (1/2 day)
- *Placement Strategies* (1/2 day)
- *Pre-Finalization Adoption Services* (1 day)

Tier II Assessor Training, to be completed within three years of completion of the Tier I series, includes four workshops and 36 hours of training:

- *Cultural Issues in Permanency Planning* (2 days)
- *Openness in Adoption* (2 days)
- *Gathering and Documenting Background Information* (1 day)
- *Achieving Permanency through Interagency Collaboration* (1 day)

II. Overview of Adoption Training Assessment

The Adoption Training Assessment is a two-year project, encompassing an examination of adoption trends and training needs from July 1, 2003, to June 30, 2005. This report documents activities of Year I: July 1, 2003, through June 30, 2004. It provides a synopsis of data collected during Year I and a preliminary analysis of that data. During Year II (July 1, 2004, through June 30, 2005), data collection will continue; and findings, conclusions, and recommendations for program improvement will be documented in a final report.

The Adoption Training Assessment is a multi-dimensional assessment of cutting-edge adoption trends and training needs, to be used to help inform the current OCWTP Adoption Assessor curricula. The key components of the training assessment are:

- A key informant interview;
- Focus groups;
- An online survey; and
- An in-depth literature review examining adoption best practices.

Year I activities focused on an assessment of adoption training needs by the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) Adoption Section staff, probate judges, and adoption directors of both public and private adoption agencies throughout Ohio.

The second year will explore feedback from adoption supervisors in public and private agencies, adoption assessors in public and private agencies and in probate courts, adoption assessor trainers, and adoptive parents.

Year I's evaluation methodology and its contribution to the understanding of the key issues are outlined below.

III. Methodology

In designing the methodology, several key considerations were significant:

- Determining the information to be collected in the assessment;
- Ensuring that key stakeholders in adoption (i.e., ODJFS Adoption Section staff, probate judges, and public and private agency directors) had the opportunity to participate; and
- Increasing the likelihood that agency directors could easily respond to the questions posed in the evaluation.

In order to achieve these objectives, four components of evaluation were proposed and implemented:

- Key informant interview
- Focus groups
- An online survey
- Literature reviews

Each specific methodology and its contribution to the overall evaluation are described in detail below.

Interview with Key Informant

Interviews with key informants provide a rich opportunity for evaluators to obtain qualitative information from knowledgeable individuals. By interviewing key informants at the beginning of an assessment, critical issues can be identified, and pertinent background information can be provided. At the outset of the assessment, an interview was held with the Section Chief of the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, Adoption Section, Rhonda Abban, MSW, to help inform the direction of the assessment. As one of the authors of Ohio's Program Improvement Plan for the Child and Family Services Review, Ms. Abban's input was deemed essential in developing an assessment that would direct meaningful changes to adoption training.

Focus Groups

Focus groups were used in order to gain additional information from multiple stakeholders. Using a structured interview guide, participants were asked to respond to a set of focused questions. When engaging the participants, a synergy is often created and participants are able to dialogue about the questions and brainstorm the responses. This methodology has been quite useful in other evaluations, especially when the group is comprised of a diverse set of individuals who have some common expertise.

Two focus groups were conducted: one with seven ODJFS Adoption Section staff, and one with probate court judges. Access to a group of probate judges was obtained with the help of Kristin Gilbert of ODJFS, who contacted the Ohio Judicial Conference, on IHS' behalf. IHS staff attended a meeting of the Ohio Judicial Conference on February 26, 2004, to conduct a focus group with the probate judges in attendance that day. Twenty-three probate judges are members of the Ohio Judicial Conference, and 10 were present for the focus group meeting.

Two sets of questions were asked of each of the two focus groups (ODJFS Adoption Section and Ohio Judicial Conference): overall adoption questions asked of both groups; and group-specific (adoption staff or court personnel) questions. The data collected during the focus groups was used to inform the survey distributed online to public and private agency directors.

Online Survey

An online survey was created using the data gathered from the two focus groups. IHS enlisted the help of Crystal Allen of the Public Children Services Association of Ohio (PCSAO), and Penny Wyman of the Ohio Association of Child Caring Agencies (OACCA), in sending an email linking directors of public and private adoption agencies to the online survey. Crystal Allen sent the email to all 88 public agency executives, and Penny Wyman sent the same email to 65 private agency directors. The email described the Assessment and asked directors to participate in the online survey. The online survey was placed on the website of the Ohio Child Welfare Training Program, and Regional

Training Center (RTC) coordinators were asked to follow up with public agency directors in their regions to encourage them to complete the survey.

Likert-type scaling (i.e., Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree) was used in order to compare different questions and respondents.

Literature Reviews

The researcher and IHS staff collaborated on reviewing adoption literature published within the past five years to determine “best practice” standards, explore research findings, and identify gaps in current curricula needing attention. The following books were reviewed during Year I:

Beal, A; Villarosa, L; & Abner, A. (1999). *The Black Parenting Book*. Broadway Books.

Berry, M., Cavazos Dylla, D., Barth, R., & Needel, B. (1998). The Role of Open Adoption in the Adjustment of Adopted Children and Their Families. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 20, 151-171.

Bothun, L. (2002). *Dialogues about Adoption: Conversations Between Parents and Their Children*. Swan Publications.

Erich, S. & Leung, P.. (1998). Factors Contributing to Family Functioning of Adoptive Children with Special Needs: A Long Term Outcome Analysis. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 20, 135-150.

Freundlich, M & Peterson, L. (1998). *Wrongful Adoption: Law, Policy and Practice*. CWLA.

Freundlich, M. (2000). *Adoption and Ethics: The Role of Race, Culture, and National Origin in Adoption*. CWLA.

, J & Smith, S. (2003) *After Adoption: The Needs of Adopted Youth*. CWLA.

Karen, R. (1998) *Becoming Attached: First Relationships and How They Shaped Our Capacity to Love*. Oxford University Press.

Keck, G & Kupecky, R. (2002) *Parenting the Hurt Child: Helping Adoptive Families Heal and Grow*. Pinon Press.

Reilly, T. & Platz, L (2003), Characteristics and Challenges of Families Who Adopt Children with Special Needs: An Empirical Study. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 25, 781-803.

Riggs, D. & Kroll, J. (2004) Families Need the Whole Truth. *Adoptalk*, Spring, North American Council for Adoptable Children.

Ryan, S; Pearlmutter, S; & Groza, V. (2004) Coming Out of the Closet: Opening Agencies to Gay and Lesbian Adoptive Parents. *Social Work*. January, ; Volume 49, Number 1. NASW.

Schooler, J. (2002) *Journeys After Adoption: Understanding Lifelong Issues*. Bergen & Garvey.

Literature reviews will continue until January 2005. At that time, an analysis of important trends gleaned from the review will inform revisions or updates to existing curricula.

IV. Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Focus Group Participants

A focus group was held with seven staff of the ODJFS Adoption Section to determine their feedback about current adoption trends and training needs. The Adoption Section is comprised of professionals who provide technical assistance to public and private agency assessors on rules and procedures relating to adoption practice in Ohio. Staff of the Adoption Section write and interpret rules regarding adoption assistance, for example, and interpret the requirements of federal laws, such as the Multi-Ethnic Placement Act and the Adoption and Safe Families Act. The names of the participants in the focus group with the ODJFS Adoption Section were not collected so participants would be more likely to share their honest thoughts and opinions.

The second focus group was held with probate judges.¹ The counties represented by the judges in attendance were:

County

Erie County
Lucas County
Trumbull County
Ashtabula County
Franklin County
Putnam County
Clark County
Richland County
Ottawa County
Butler County

Online Survey Respondents

The following charts provide data on the survey respondents' demographic characteristics. Each chart presents data separately for public and private agency directors. The sample consists of all respondents to the survey. A total of 79 public and

¹ The names of the judges in attendance are located in Appendix A.

17 private agency directors responded to the survey. Each demographic characteristic is described in further detail below.

Chart 1 provides the response rates for the two groups. As is evident in the chart, there was a larger response rate (90%) from the public agency directors as compared to the private agency directors (26%). The reason for this large discrepancy is not known. It is possible the follow-up by RTC coordinators with public agency directors may have increased their return rate.

Chart 1: Response Rates by Agency Type

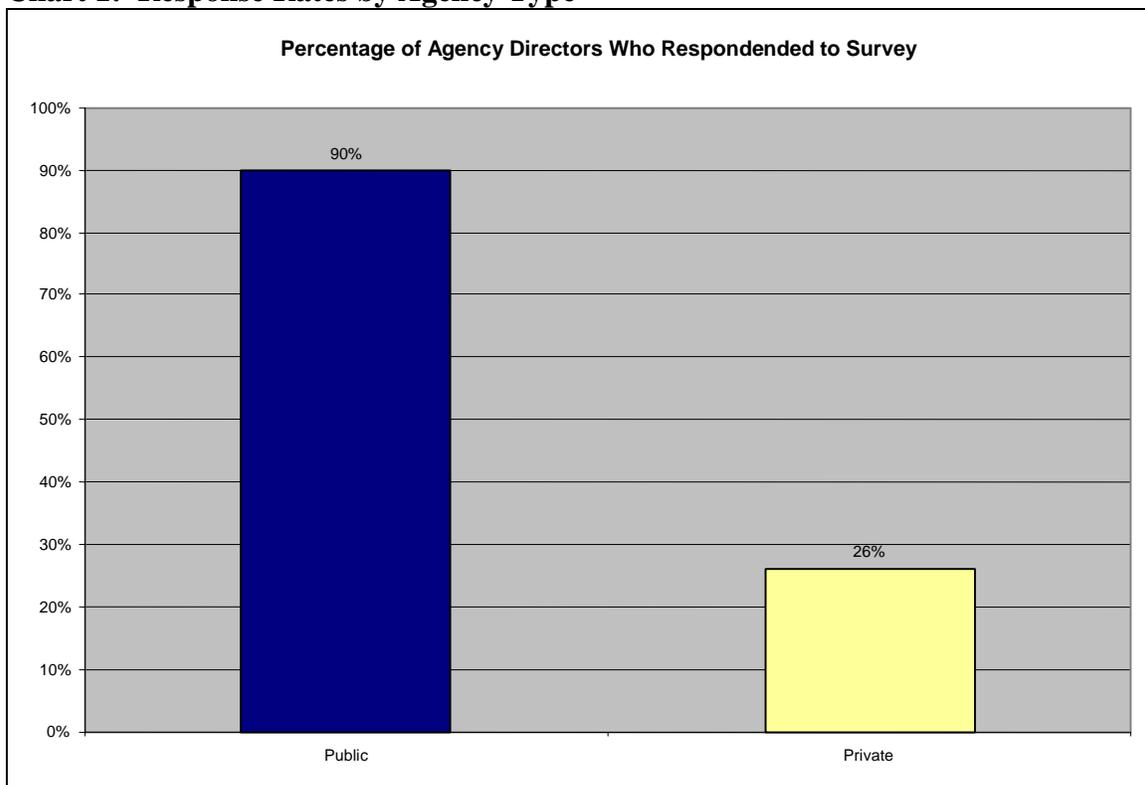
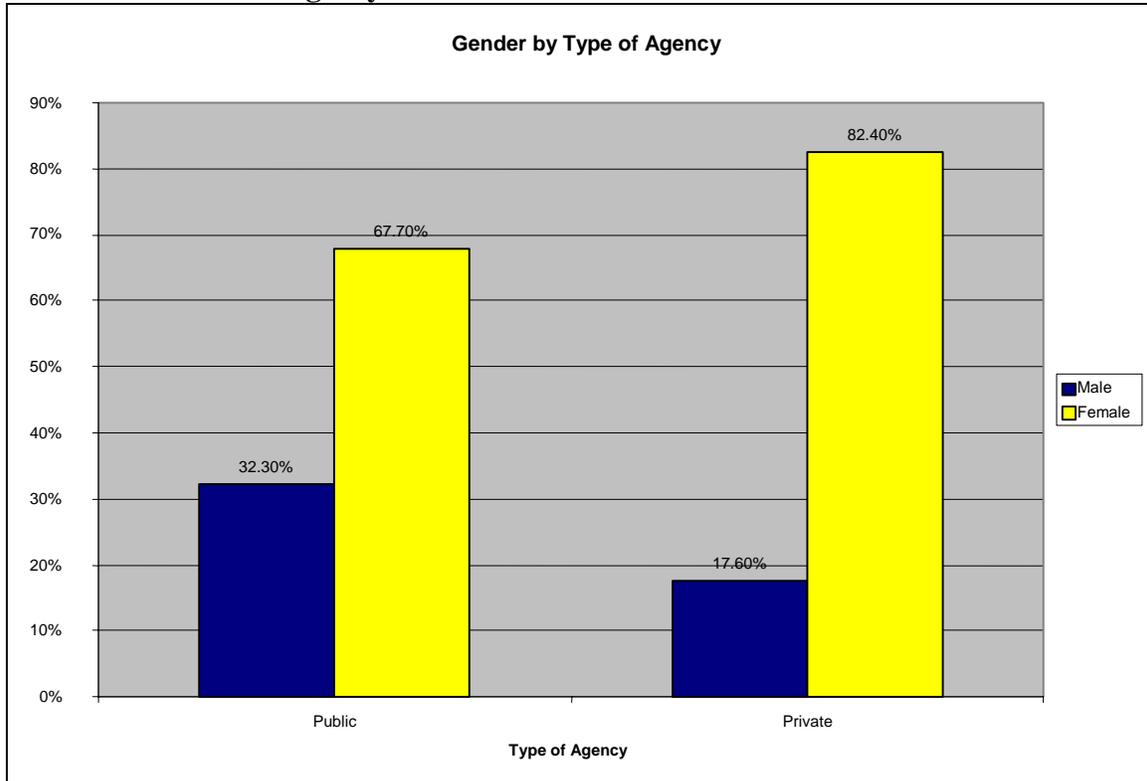


Chart 2 provides the breakdown of gender by type of agency. As is evident for both public and private agency directors, the majority of directors are female.

Chart 2: Gender of Agency Directors



Participants were asked to identify their highest educational degree. Chart 3 presents the educational backgrounds of the public directors, and Chart 4 presents the information for the private directors. For the public directors, 51% have a bachelors degree, whereas 40% have a masters degree, 4% have a law degree, and 5% indicated other.

The private agencies had a less diverse educational background with 87% holding a masters degree and 13% a bachelors degree. Furthermore, a larger percentage of private agency directors (87%) have a masters degree as compared to only 40% of public agency directors.

Chart 3: Public Agency Education Backgrounds

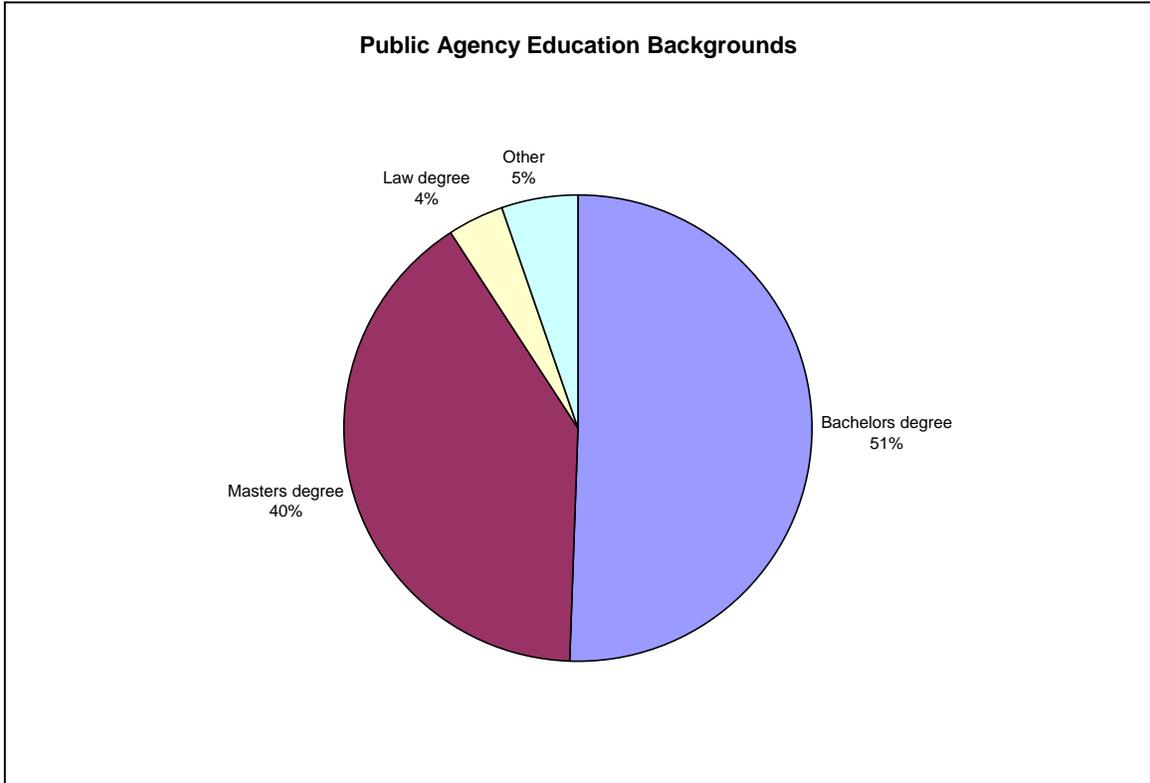


Chart 4: Private Agency Education Backgrounds

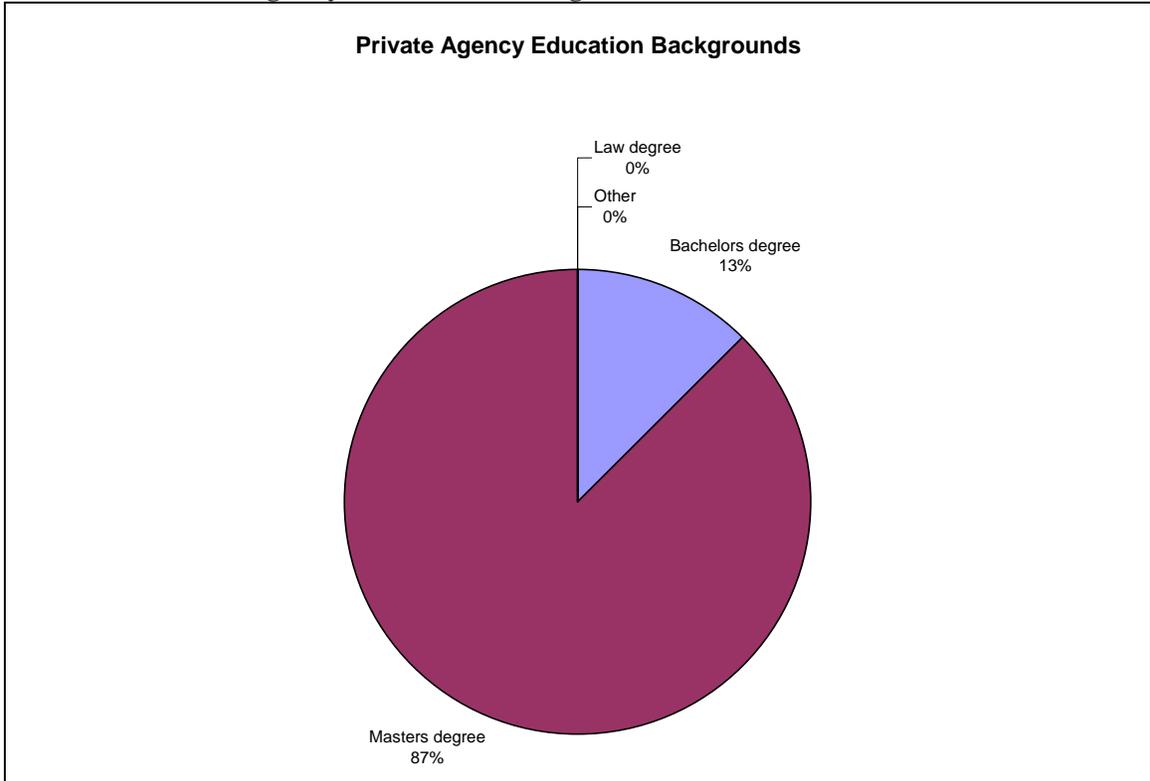


Chart 5 provides the breakdown of the directors' length of time in their positions. The average length of time in the position is different for the two groups. The public agency directors have been in their positions approximately twice as long (8.44 versus 4.21 years).

Chart 5: Average Length of Time in Position

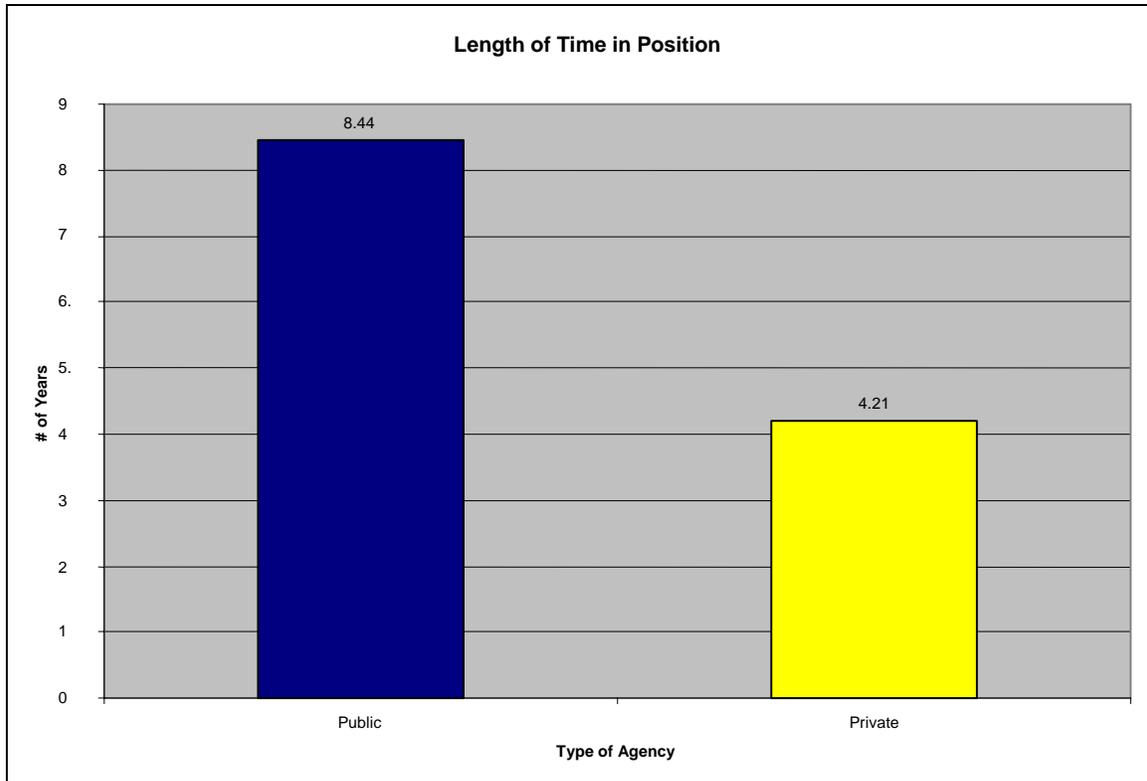


Table 1 provides information on the demographics for all participants in the online survey.

Table 1: Demographics for All Participants

| | Percentages (n=95) |
|---|-----------------------|
| Type of agency | |
| Public | 82.3% |
| Private | 17.7% |
| | |
| Position in agency | |
| Agency director | 34.4% |
| Manager or director of adoption section | 44.8% |
| Other | 20.8% |
| | |
| Average length of time in position | 7.74 years |
| | |
| Highest degree completed | |
| Bachelors degree | 42.7% |
| Masters degree | 46.9% |
| Doctoral degree | 0.0% |
| Law degree | 3.1% |
| Medical degree | 0.0% |
| Other | 7.3% |
| | |
| Gender | |
| Male | 70.3% |
| Female | 29.7% |

V. Findings

Key Informant Interview

Initially, an in-depth interview was conducted with Rhonda Abban, Chief of the ODJFS Adoption Section. During the interview, the following areas were discussed:

- Adoption trends in Ohio
- Curriculum and training needs
- Special issues in adoption
 - Multi-Ethnic Placement Act (MEPA)
 - Special needs adoption
- Future of adoption practice
- Ohio's Child and Family Services Review Performance Improvement Plan (PIP)

Each of the aforementioned issues was discussed to determine the key issues to be addressed during the first year assessment. Based on the interview with the Section Chief, it was determined that all these issues should be included in the focus group and online survey questions.

Focus Group Findings

The findings are organized by focus group questions and the responses from court personnel and adoption section staff.

Table 2: Summary of Focus Group Findings

| | Adoption Section Staff | Court Personnel |
|---|---|--|
| What are the key issues facing adoption practice today? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special needs adoptions • Money available to promote adoption practices sometimes leaves out certain children • Standardizing assessment tools • Reducing values and bias in making decisions about appropriate families • Ensuring that state and federal adoption policies are congruent | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gay and lesbian couples adopting together • Understanding the issues with closed adoptions and sealed records from previous years |
| In what ways do you see adoption practice changing in the future? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Federal policies will continue to evolve • Additional money will become available to support older child or special needs adoptions • Greater focus on shorter time frames for termination of parental rights • Needs of birth parents may not be adequately considered; greater emphasis on adoptive families rather than birth families • Concurrent planning will become even more important | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More pressure for open adoptions • Extending visitation rights to birth families • Adoption of embryos • Technology issues of surrogate parents and their role as birth parents • Transracial adoption • Transsexual adoption |

| | Adoption Section Staff | Court Personnel |
|---|---|--|
| What improvements have you seen in workers or in the system as a result of workers completing Adoption Assessor training? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workers are introduced to what it is like to work in adoptions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fewer questions like, “What do you want me to do?” Paperwork Some improvements, some frustration Seems like hoops to jump through |
| What aspects, if any, need to be changed in the adoption curriculum? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> More on-the-job training needs to be incorporated Training needs to do a better job of connecting theory to the real world Focus more on concurrent planning Provide additional training on the importance of the child’s medical and social history Work more on genograms Improve communication skills Promote having a passion for this type of work | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nothing needs to be changed |
| In what ways are workers better or less prepared as a result of completing the training? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> They have basic knowledge of assessment They know some of the current legislation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some assessors are not prepared for working with children who have special needs. |

More specific details are provided in Appendix B.

Summary of Findings from Focus Groups

Overall, both groups provided very different answers to the focus group questions. The ODJFS adoption staff focused their responses on policies, on-the-job training, and their passion for the work. Probate judges discussed changes in the way adoptive families are chosen, specifically, working with gay, lesbian, or transgendered families; understanding the role of the surrogate parent; and adoption of embryos. The probate judges seemed to be satisfied, on the whole, with Adoption Assessor training.

Findings from Online Survey

The following tables highlight the responses to each of the Adoption Issues (AI), Adoption Protocols (AP), and Adoption Training (AT) questions. The percentage of respondents for each question is presented by the type of agency director (public or private). Following each table, charts are included to highlight the differences in the average scores for each question by public or private agency.

Table 3: Adoption Issue Findings

| | Public (n=79) | Private (n=17) |
|--|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| Adoption Issues | | |
| <i>AI1. Most adoptions in my agency are special needs adoptions (i.e., older child adoptions, children with disabilities, etc.).</i> | | |
| Strongly Agree | 55.1% | 70.6% |
| Agree | 30.8% | 29.4% |
| Disagree | 12.8% | 0.0% |
| Strongly Disagree | 1.3% | 0.0% |
| Don't Know | 0.0% | 0.0% |
| | | |
| <i>AI2. Children are not being prepared to move from foster placement to adoptive placement.</i> | | |
| Strongly Agree | 1.3% | 11.8% |
| Agree | 15.2% | 35.3% |
| Disagree | 46.8% | 41.2% |
| Strongly Disagree | 29.1% | 5.9% |
| Don't Know | 7.6% | 5.9% |
| | | |

| <i>AI3. The shorter time frames required in the Adoption and Safe Families Act don't provide the birth family with the services and support needed.</i> | Public | Private |
|---|---------------|----------------|
| Strongly Agree | 5.1% | 17.6% |
| Agree | 13.9% | 23.5% |
| Disagree | 49.4% | 35.3% |
| Strongly Disagree | 22.8% | 11.8% |
| Don't Know | 8.8% | 11.8% |
| | | |
| <i>AI4. Dually licensed Foster/Adopt homes are beneficial for moving children to permanency more quickly and efficiently.</i> | | |
| Strongly Agree | 63.3% | 11.8% |
| Agree | 26.6% | 82.4% |
| Disagree | 5.1% | 0.0% |
| Strongly Disagree | 0.0% | 5.9% |
| Don't Know | 5.0% | 0.0% |
| | | |
| <i>AI5. Concurrent planning has facilitated more timely adoptive placements.</i> | | |
| Strongly Agree | 20.3% | 41.2% |
| Agree | 45.6% | 23.5% |
| Disagree | 12.7% | 17.6% |
| Strongly Disagree | 3.8% | 5.9% |
| Don't Know | 17.7% | 11.8% |
| | | |

- All asked participants whether most of the adoptions in their agency were special needs adoptions.
- There were more private agency directors who strongly agreed that the agency worked primarily with special needs adoptions.
- For statement AI2, the private agency directors agreed more often that children were not being prepared to move from foster placement to adoptive placement.

- For question AI3, private agency directors were more likely than public directors to indicate that ASFA doesn't provide the birth family with the services and support needed.
- Finally, for question AI4, there were a larger percentage of public agency directors who agreed that dually licensed foster/adopt homes are beneficial for moving children to permanency more quickly and efficiently.

Chart 6 provides the average scores for statements and provides numbers for both types of respondents. There were statistically significant differences ($p < .05$) in the average scores on the following questions: AI1, AI2, AI3, and AI4.

Chart 6: Adoption Issues Comparisons by Group

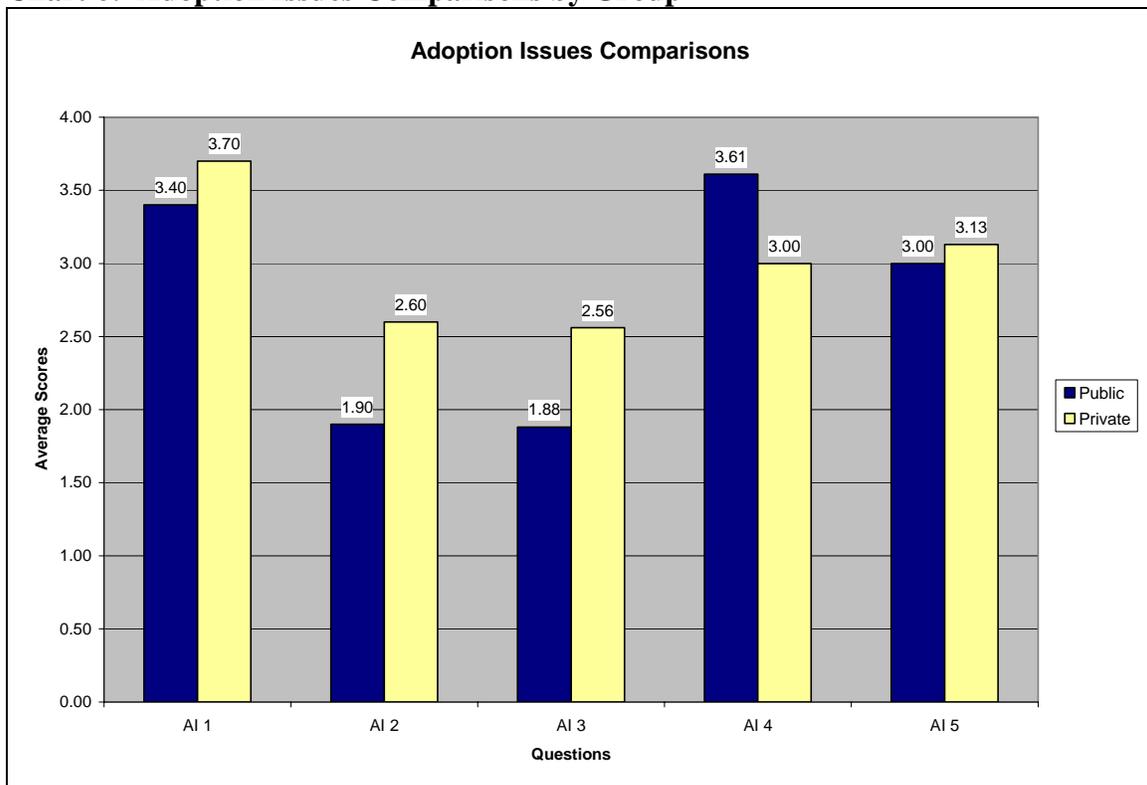


Table 4: Adoption Protocol Findings

Agency directors were asked the following questions about the need for change in adoption protocol to determine non-training barriers to good adoption practice.

| Adoption Protocol | Public | Private |
|--|---------------|----------------|
| <i>AP1. An instrument should be developed to assess a child's readiness for adoption.</i> | | |
| Strongly Agree | 29.1% | 23.5% |
| Agree | 39.2% | 41.2% |
| Disagree | 19.0% | 29.4% |
| Strongly Disagree | 8.9% | 5.9% |
| Don't Know | 3.8% | 0.0% |
| | | |
| <i>AP2. An instrument should be developed to assess the best matched family for meeting the child's needs.</i> | | |
| Strongly Agree | 20.3% | 37.5% |
| Agree | 55.4% | 43.8% |
| Disagree | 15.2% | 12.5% |
| Strongly Disagree | 7.6% | 6.3% |
| Don't Know | 6.3% | 5.9% |
| | | |

Chart 7 provides the average scores for each question, noting the type of agency director. For the adoption protocol questions, there were not statistically significant differences ($p < .05$) in the way in which public and private agency directors responded to the statements.

Chart 7: Adoption Protocol Comparisons

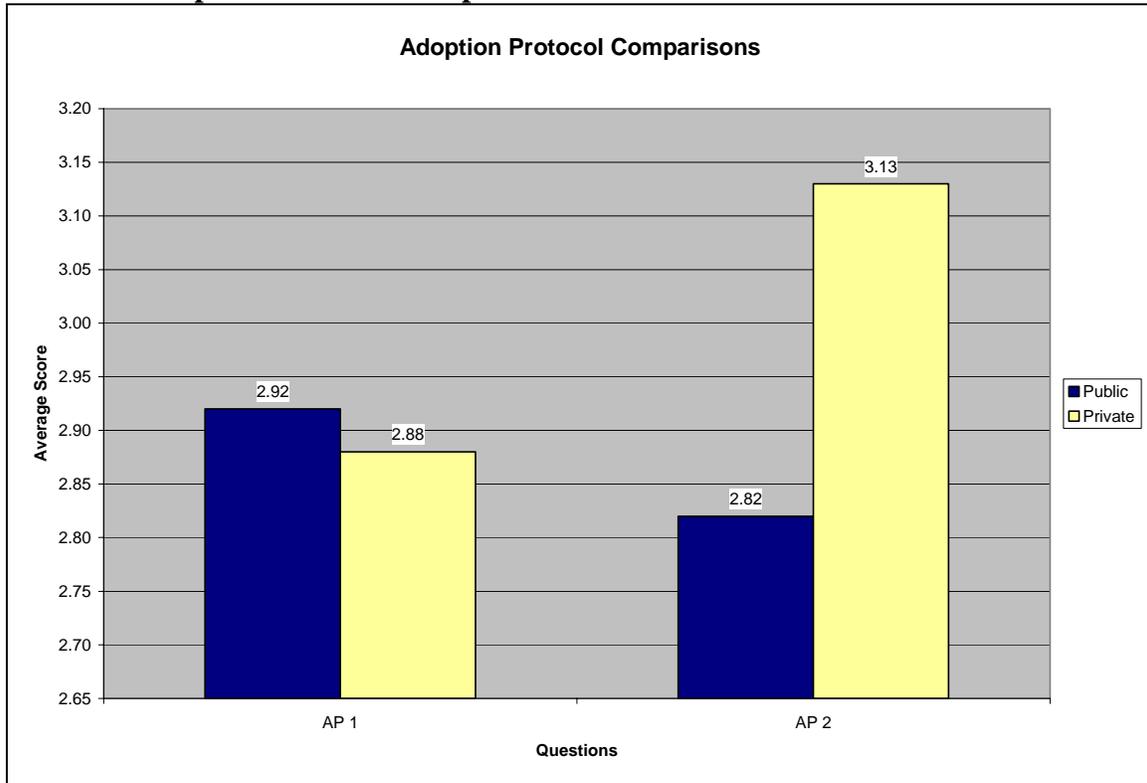


Table 5: Adoption Training Findings

For the adoption training questions, there was not a statistically significant difference between public and private agency directors' responses; the participants responded in fairly similar ways for each of the statements.

| Adoption Training | Public | Private |
|---|---------------|----------------|
| <i>ATI. Additional training should be incorporated on how to place children with special needs.</i> | | |
| Strongly Agree | 26.6% | 47.1% |
| Agree | 55.7% | 35.3% |
| Disagree | 10.1% | 11.8% |
| Strongly Disagree | 5.1% | 5.9% |
| Don't Know | 2.5% | 0.0% |

| <i>AT2. New adoption workers are entering the field of adoption practice without having adequate preparation.</i> | Public | Private |
|---|---------------|----------------|
| Strongly Agree | 15.2% | 23.5% |
| Agree | 36.7% | 29.4% |
| Disagree | 20.3% | 17.6% |
| Strongly Disagree | 7.6% | 5.9% |
| Don't Know | 20.2% | 23.5% |
| | | |
| <i>AT3. In order to improve adoption practice, supervisors need to provide workers more opportunities on the job to reinforce classroom or workshop learning.</i> | | |
| Strongly Agree | 17.7% | 17.6% |
| Agree | 40.5% | 64.7% |
| Disagree | 22.8% | 11.8% |
| Strongly Disagree | 6.3% | 0.0% |
| Don't Know | 12.6% | 5.9% |
| | | |
| <i>AT4. Additional training should be provided on conducting family assessments that provide information helpful in determining good adoptive homes.</i> | | |
| Strongly Agree | 27.8% | 41.2% |
| Agree | 53.2% | 35.3% |
| Disagree | 10.1% | 11.8% |
| Strongly Disagree | 5.1% | 11.8% |
| Don't Know | 3.8% | 0.0% |
| | | |
| <i>AT5. Additional training should be provided on removing personal bias when conducting the family assessment.</i> | | |
| Strongly Agree | 25.3% | 47.1% |
| Agree | 41.8% | 23.5% |
| Disagree | 21.5% | 23.5% |
| Strongly Disagree | 6.3% | 5.9% |
| Don't Know | 5.0% | 0.0% |
| | | |

| <i>AT6. Additional training should be provided on the values of the social work profession and the adoption worker.</i> | Public | Private |
|---|---------------|----------------|
| Strongly Agree | 20.3% | 5.9% |
| Agree | 36.7% | 52.9% |
| Disagree | 27.8% | 35.3% |
| Strongly Disagree | 3.8% | 5.9% |
| Don't Know | 11.4% | 0.0% |
| | | |

The differences in the mean scores for each question are provided in Charts 8 and 9. For the adoption training questions, there was not a statistically significant difference between responses of public and private agency directors; participants responded in fairly similar ways for each of the statements.

Chart 8: Adoption Training Responses

Responses to questions about adoption training (questions AT1 through AT6 detailed below) are reflected in Chart 8.

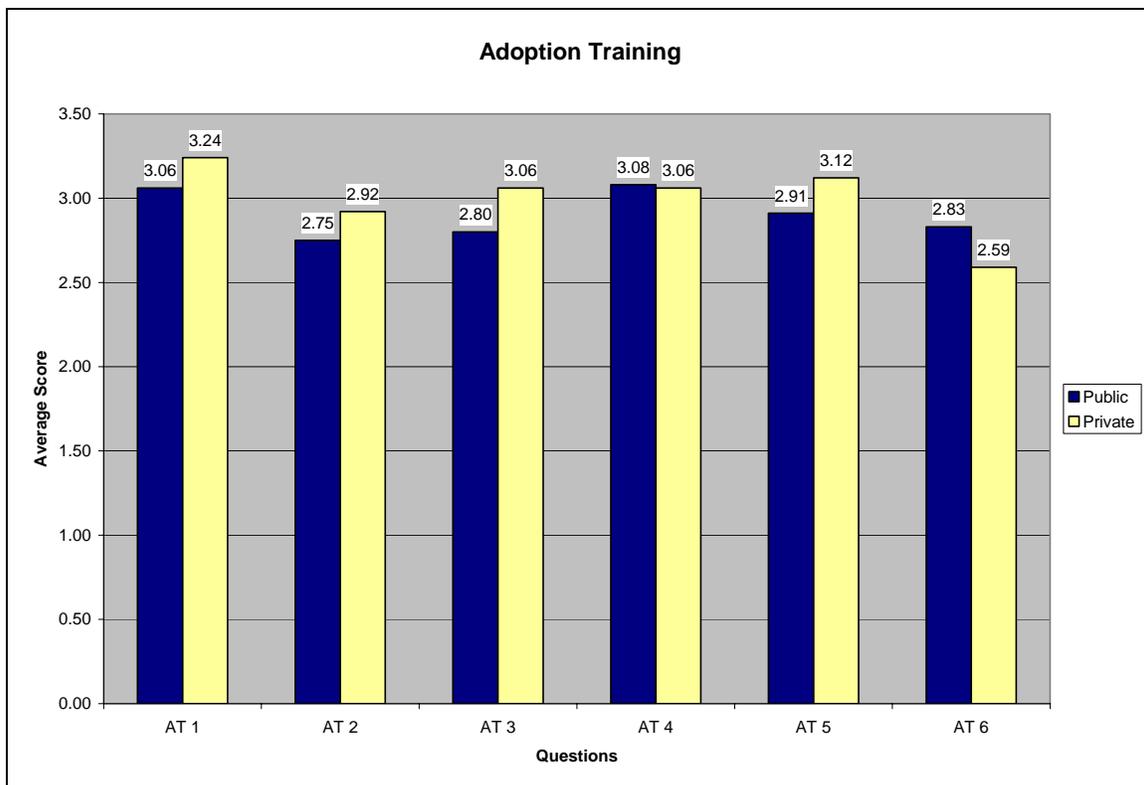


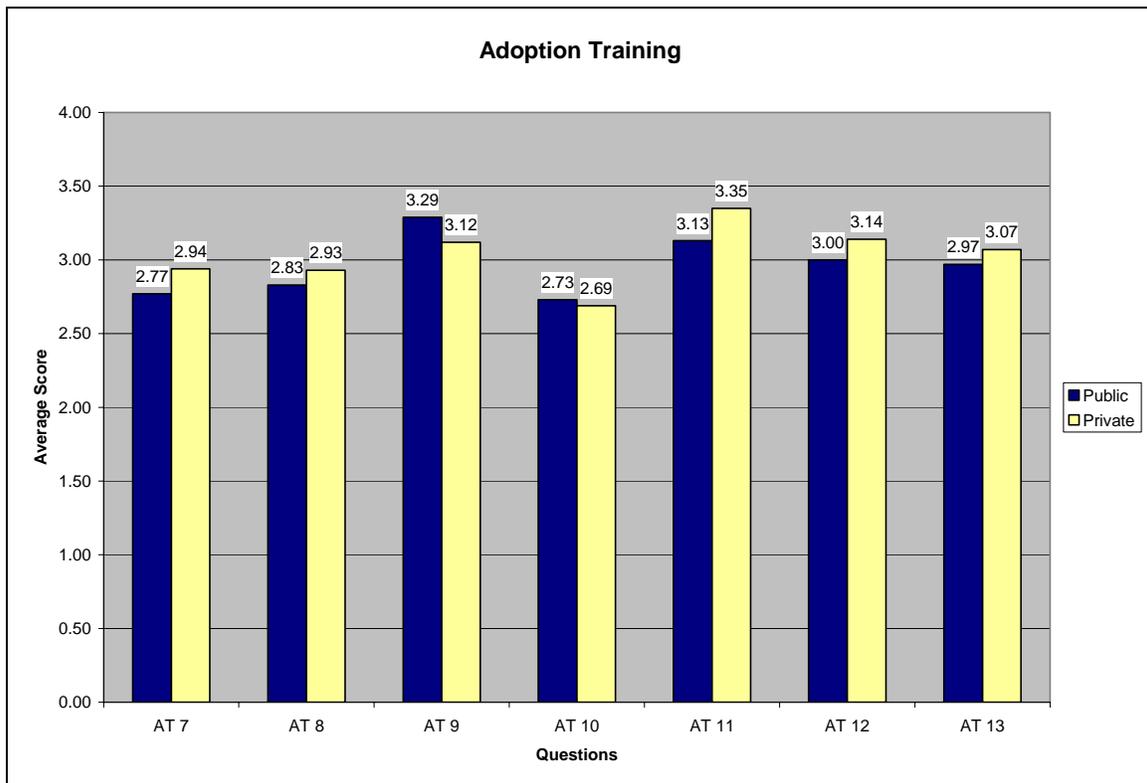
Table 6: Adoption Training Findings (continued)

| | Public | Private |
|---|---------------|----------------|
| <i>AT7. Additional training should be provided on the Multi-Ethnic Placement Act (MEPA).</i> | | |
| Strongly Agree | 24.1% | 11.8% |
| Agree | 38.0% | 64.7% |
| Disagree | 24.1% | 17.6% |
| Strongly Disagree | 11.4% | 0.0% |
| Don't Know | 2.5% | 5.9% |
| | | |
| <i>AT8. Additional training should be provided on working with birth families.</i> | | |
| Strongly Agree | 19.0% | 23.5% |
| Agree | 46.8% | 41.2% |
| Disagree | 25.3% | 17.6% |
| Strongly Disagree | 5.1% | 5.9% |
| Don't Know | 3.8% | 11.8% |
| | | |
| <i>AT9. The training should provide more material on types of special needs (Reactive Attachment Disorder, ADHD, etc) that children may have.</i> | | |
| Strongly Agree | 39.2% | 41.2% |
| Agree | 44.3% | 35.3% |
| Disagree | 5.1% | 17.6% |
| Strongly Disagree | 3.8% | 5.9% |
| Don't Know | 7.6% | 0.0% |
| | | |
| <i>AT10. Additional training should be provided on termination of parental rights.</i> | | |
| Strongly Agree | 21.5% | 11.8% |
| Agree | 34.2% | 47.1% |
| Disagree | 31.6% | 29.4% |
| Strongly Disagree | 7.6% | 5.9% |
| Don't Know | 5.0% | 5.9% |
| | | |
| <i>AT11. Additional training should be provided on the adoptive child's grieving process.</i> | | |
| Strongly Agree | 26.6% | 47.1% |
| Agree | 58.2% | 41.2% |
| Disagree | 8.9% | 11.8% |
| Strongly Disagree | 2.5% | 0.0% |
| Don't Know | 3.8% | 0.0% |
| | | |

| | | |
|--|---------------|----------------|
| <i>AT12. As a result of completing Tier I and Tier II, there have been improvements in the assessor's ability to assess, place, and support adoptive children.</i> | Public | Private |
| Strongly Agree | 20.3% | 23.5% |
| Agree | 55.7% | 47.1% |
| Disagree | 10.1% | 11.8% |
| Strongly Disagree | 5.1% | 0.0% |
| Don't Know | 8.8% | 17.6% |
| | | |
| <i>AT13. As a result of completing Tier I and Tier II, there have been improvements in the assessor's ability to assess, match, and support adoptive families.</i> | | |
| Strongly Agree | 16.5% | 23.5% |
| Agree | 58.2% | 41.2% |
| Disagree | 11.4% | 17.6% |
| Strongly Disagree | 3.8% | 0.0% |
| Don't Know | 10.1% | 17.6% |

Chart 9: Adoption Training Findings (continued)

Responses to questions about adoption training (questions AT7 through AT13 detailed below) are reflected in Chart 9.



The following Table 7 is a summary of all respondents' data and responses to the statements.

The respondents were asked to rate the questions based on the following four-point scale:

- 1= Strongly Disagree
- 2= Disagree
- 3= Agree
- 4= Strongly Agree

An average score is provided for each statement, and is graphically represented in the following diagram. The following example shows that the average score was 3.05, and is represented by the bolded line. This scale is provided in order to help interpret the average score.

Example

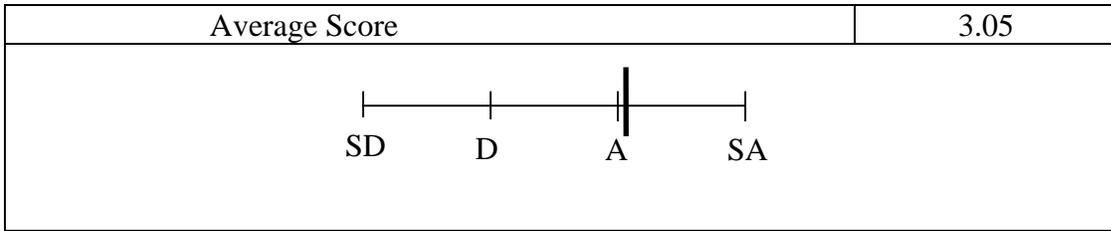


Table 7: Adoption Issues Findings for All Participants

| Adoption Issues | |
|--|-------|
| <i>All. Most adoptions in my agency are special needs adoptions (i.e., older child adoptions, children with disabilities, etc.).</i> | |
| Strongly Agree | 57.3% |
| Agree | 30.2% |
| Disagree | 10.4% |
| Strongly Disagree | 1.0% |
| Don't Know | 1.0% |
| Average Score | 3.45 |
| | |

| | |
|---|-------|
| <i>AI2. Children are not being prepared to move from foster placement to adoptive placement.</i> | |
| Strongly Agree | 3.1% |
| Agree | 18.8% |
| Disagree | 45.8% |
| Strongly Disagree | 25.0% |
| Don't Know | 4.2% |
| Average Score | 2.00 |
| | |
| <i>AI3. The shorter time frames required in the Adoption and Safe Families Act don't provide the birth family with the services and support needed.</i> | |
| Strongly Agree | 7.3% |
| Agree | 15.6% |
| Disagree | 46.9% |
| Strongly Disagree | 20.8% |
| Don't Know | 9.4% |
| Average Score | 2.10 |
| | |
| <i>AI4. Dually licensed foster/adopt home are beneficial for moving children to permanency more quickly and efficiently.</i> | |
| Strongly Agree | 54.2% |
| Agree | 36.5% |
| Disagree | 4.2% |
| Strongly Disagree | 1.0% |
| Don't Know | 4.2% |
| Average Score | 3.50 |
| | |

| | |
|--|-------|
| <i>AI5. Concurrent planning has facilitated more timely adoptive placements.</i> | |
| Strongly Agree | 24.0% |
| Agree | 41.7% |
| Disagree | 13.5% |
| Strongly Disagree | 4.2% |
| Don't Know | 16.7% |
| Average Score | 3.03 |
| | |

Table 4: Adoption Protocol Findings for All Participants

| | |
|--|-------|
| Adoption Protocol | |
| <i>AP1. An instrument should be developed to assess a child's readiness for adoption.</i> | |
| Strongly Agree | 28.1% |
| Agree | 39.6% |
| Disagree | 20.8% |
| Strongly Disagree | 8.3% |
| Don't Know | 3.1% |
| Average Score | 2.90 |
| | |
| <i>AP2. An instrument should be developed to assess the best-matched family for meeting the child's needs.</i> | |
| Strongly Agree | 21.9% |
| Agree | 50.0% |
| Disagree | 14.6% |
| Strongly Disagree | 7.3% |
| Don't Know | 6.2% |
| Average Score | 2.92 |
| | |

Table 5: Adoption Training Findings for All Participants

| Adoption Training | |
|---|-------|
| <i>AT1. Additional training should be incorporated on how to place children with special needs.</i> | |
| Strongly Agree | 30.2% |
| Agree | 52.1% |
| Disagree | 10.4% |
| Strongly Disagree | 5.2% |
| Don't Know | 2.1% |
| Average Score | 3.10 |
| | |
| <i>AT2. New adoption workers are entering the field of adoption practice without having adequate preparation.</i> | |
| Strongly Agree | 16.7% |
| Agree | 35.4% |
| Disagree | 19.8% |
| Strongly Disagree | 7.3% |
| Don't Know | 18.8% |
| Average Score | 2.78 |
| | |
| <i>AT3. In order to improve adoption practice, supervisors need to provide workers more opportunities on the job to reinforce classroom or workshop learning.</i> | |
| Strongly Agree | 17.7% |
| Agree | 44.8% |
| Disagree | 20.8% |
| Strongly Disagree | 5.2% |
| Don't Know | 9.4% |
| Average Score | 2.85 |
| | |

| | |
|--|-------|
| <i>AT4. Additional training should be provided on conducting family assessments that provide information helpful in determining good adoptive homes.</i> | |
| Strongly Agree | 30.2% |
| Agree | 50.0% |
| Disagree | 10.4% |
| Strongly Disagree | 6.3% |
| Don't Know | 3.1% |
| Average Score | 3.08 |
| <p>A horizontal line with four tick marks labeled SD, D, A, and SA from left to right. A vertical line is drawn at the position of 'A'.</p> | |
| <i>AT5. Additional training should be provided on removing personal bias when conducting the family assessment.</i> | |
| Strongly Agree | 29.2% |
| Agree | 38.5% |
| Disagree | 21.9% |
| Strongly Disagree | 6.3% |
| Don't Know | 4.2% |
| Average Score | 2.95 |
| <p>A horizontal line with four tick marks labeled SD, D, A, and SA from left to right. A vertical line is drawn at the position of 'A'.</p> | |
| <i>AT6. Additional training should be provided on the values of the social work profession and the adoption worker.</i> | |
| Strongly Agree | 17.7% |
| Agree | 39.6% |
| Disagree | 29.2% |
| Strongly Disagree | 4.2% |
| Don't Know | 9.4% |
| Average Score | 2.78 |
| <p>A horizontal line with four tick marks labeled SD, D, A, and SA from left to right. A vertical line is drawn at the position of 'A'.</p> | |

| | |
|---|-------|
| <i>AT7. Additional training should be provided on the Multi-Ethnic Placement Act (MEPA).</i> | |
| Strongly Agree | 21.9% |
| Agree | 42.7% |
| Disagree | 22.9% |
| Strongly Disagree | 9.4% |
| Don't Know | 3.1% |
| Average Score | 2.80 |
| | |
| <i>AT8. Additional training should be provided on working with birth families.</i> | |
| Strongly Agree | 19.8% |
| Agree | 45.8% |
| Disagree | 24.0% |
| Strongly Disagree | 5.2% |
| Don't Know | 5.2% |
| Average Score | 2.85 |
| | |
| <i>AT9. The training should provide more material on types of special needs (Reactive Attachment Disorder, ADHD, etc.)that children may have.</i> | |
| Strongly Agree | 39.6% |
| Agree | 42.7% |
| Disagree | 7.3% |
| Strongly Disagree | 4.2% |
| Don't Know | 6.3% |
| Average Score | 3.26 |
| | |

| | |
|--|-------|
| <i>AT10. Additional training should be provided on termination of parental rights.</i> | |
| Strongly Agree | 19.8% |
| Agree | 36.5% |
| Disagree | 31.3% |
| Strongly Disagree | 7.3% |
| Don't Know | 5.2% |
| Average Score | 2.73 |
| | |
| <i>AT11. Additional training should be provided on the adoptive child's grieving process.</i> | |
| Strongly Agree | 30.2% |
| Agree | 55.2% |
| Disagree | 9.4% |
| Strongly Disagree | 2.1% |
| Don't Know | 3.1% |
| Average Score | 3.17 |
| | |
| <i>AT12. As a result of completing Tier I and Tier II, there have been improvements in the assessor's ability to assess, place, and support adoptive children.</i> | |
| Strongly Agree | 20.8% |
| Agree | 54.2% |
| Disagree | 10.4% |
| Strongly Disagree | 4.2% |
| Don't Know | 10.4% |
| Average Score | 3.02 |
| | |

| | |
|--|-------|
| <i>AT13. As a result of completing Tier I and Tier II, there have been improvements in the assessor's ability to assess, match, and support adoptive families.</i> | |
| Strongly Agree | 17.7% |
| Agree | 55.2% |
| Disagree | 12.5% |
| Strongly Disagree | 3.1% |
| Don't Know | 11.5% |
| Average Score | 2.99 |
| | |

VI. Preliminary Analysis and Next Steps

This assessment provides the OCWTP with information on adoption trends and training needs from multiple stakeholders and perspectives. It is important to note that this assessment is the first phase of a two-part project, and all results to this point are considered preliminary.

1. The interview with Rhonda Abban, ODJFS Adoption Section Chief, was helpful in identifying the initial questions for the focus groups and the online survey. The interview also provided a specific focus for the assessment so that it identified the issues and needs of ODJFS, and provided a framework for assisting ODJFS with successful implementation of the Program Improvement Plan by informing the Department about gaps in the current training and preparation for assessors.
2. Because over half of all directors believe that new workers are entering the field of adoption practice without adequate preparation for the work, the need for Adoption Assessor training for new workers appears to be validated. Even so, there are significant limitations in preparing new workers in only six training days to complete complex, abstract tasks requiring a significant amount of skill and on-the-job practice.
3. More than half of all directors agreed that supervisors should provide workers with more opportunities to transfer knowledge attained during Adoption Assessor workshops to the job. Workshops in assisting adoption supervisors in mentoring and coaching new workers in good clinical adoption practice may significantly “raise the bar” of practice in Ohio. This area should be explored in more depth during Year II with both supervisors and assessors.
4. Most directors concur that concurrent case planning and foster-to-adopt placements are helpful in achieving timely permanence for children.

5. Overall, there were few statistically significant differences between the public and private agency directors' opinions regarding adoption issues, adoption protocols, and adoption training. Both groups reported satisfaction with the training and stated that the training met the needs of their agency staff.
6. In Year I, the findings from the focus groups provided affirmation that the current adoption assessor curricula are addressing most of the issues identified by ODJFS and are, on the whole, up to date. Probate judges were able to provide additional perspectives on how adoption practice and policies are likely to change in the future, and the OCWTP will need to consider program improvements in light of those changes.
7. The directors of public and private agencies noted that additional training on placing children with special needs should be incorporated into the training. Further, the directors agreed strongly that more training is needed on types of special needs displayed by waiting children. When Adoption Assessor curricula were created, the ODJFS Contract Manager decided to provide training on adoptive placement in general, as half of all assessors statewide place infants rather than children with special needs. However, this data suggests that many workers in public agencies or private special services agencies need additional development in the techniques of placing children with special needs. It may be helpful to develop an elective standardized workshop on placement of children with special needs for those workers engaging in this type of adoption practice. The Council on Accreditation requires 10 hours of adoption-specific training annually for adoption workers. As many county child welfare agencies are seeking COA approval, the OCWTP could develop elective standardized adoption workshops for assessors who wish to further refine their skills.
8. Further, directors indicated additional training needs in the area of family assessment. Again, elective workshops may be provided that will enhance skills

of assessors beyond the “basic” requirements of the Tier I workshop, *Family and Child Assessment*.

9. In Year II, focus groups or questionnaires with adoption supervisors, assessors, and trainers should follow up on directors’ feedback that assessors need additional training in the areas of placing children with special needs and in family assessment.

On the whole, it appears that more curriculum modules offered as electives would benefit the assessors, the agency, and the families and children served. By making the additional training elective, adoption workers can choose what best meets their needs and can specialize in particular areas. This is an area to be explored further in the surveys sent to the supervisors, assessors, and adoptive parents next year.

10. This assessment found that public agency directors have been in their positions twice as long as private agency directors, since before the inception of the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA). The private agency directors have been in their positions since ASFA was implemented. In Year II, adoption supervisors in public agencies could be asked if they experience administrative resistance to the requirements of timely permanence for children mandated by AFSA.

VII. Year II

The next steps in the assessment process will be to gain additional feedback from other perspectives. The other stakeholders who are key in understanding cutting-edge adoption trends are adoption supervisors, adoption assessors, adoption trainers, and adoptive parents. Focus groups and a survey will also be used with the latter group. Similar questions will be used from this evaluation, and other population-specific questions will be generated. Responses to the questions, similar to those used in this evaluation, will be used for comparison purposes among the different groups. Further, the literature review will continue to examine books and articles pertaining to latest research or trends in adoption practice. Once these findings have been collected, specific recommendations will be made to identify aspects of the curriculum that may need to be changed, updated, or developed.

Appendix A

| Judge | County |
|----------------------------|------------------|
| Judge Bev McGookey | Erie County |
| Judge Jack Puffenberger | Lucas County |
| Judge Thomas A. Swift | Trumbull County |
| Judge Charles G. Hague | Ashtabula County |
| Judge Thomas Unverferth | Putnam County |
| Judge Larry Belskis | Franklin County |
| Judge Richard P. Carey | Clark County |
| Judge Philip Alan B. Mayer | Richland County |
| Judge Kathleen Giesler | Ottawa County |
| Judge Randy T. Rogers | Butler County |

Appendix B

ODJFS Adoption Section Staff Focus Group Findings

1. What are the key issues facing adoption practice today?
 - Special Needs adoptions
 - Adoptions becoming more intense
 - Difficult to manage
 - Older children difficult to place
 - Finding resources
 - Workers find it difficult to move from theory to practice, especially regarding special needs
 - Hurts families and children
 - Lack of On-the-Job Training (OTJ)
 - Workers in smaller counties go straight from school to adoption specialization—they don't have the training they need in order to do this type of work
 - Additional money available to some agencies for adopting older children—needs to be provided to all agencies
 - Children are not prepared for being moved from foster placement to adoptive home
 - Assessment tools are not standardized across all agencies and counties
 - We currently don't know what criteria make a good home
 - We don't have any way to assess a child's readiness for adoption
 - There currently isn't a way to match children with appropriate placements
 - Worker's feelings, values, and biases come into the decision-making criteria when deciding appropriate families
 - For example, African American families are sometimes delayed or denied placement of children
 - There are different expectations among state and local agency in regards to the training needs
2. In what ways do you see adoption practice changing in the future?
 - Federal government changes in policies will have an influence on adoption practice
 - For example, having adoption assistance money becoming available to focus on older children
 - There are setbacks when adoption monies become available for specific populations, as other children in the system can be neglected
 - Length of time to finalization—there will be a greater focus on shorter time frames

- Strong focus to move children to adoption, and not necessarily taking into consideration all of the needs of birth parents
 - The focus becomes the child and the adoptive family, and the birth family is left out
 - The shorter time frames that are required in ASFA hurts the birth families—the birth families are not able to make adjustments in time to keep their children
 - Concurrent planning will become even more important
 - The state's Performance Improvement Plan will have a greater focus on concurrent planning
3. How is the current training meeting the needs of adoption caseworkers?
- Overall the training is introducing the issues of working in adoption
4. What aspects, if any, need to be changed in the adoption curriculum?
- More on-the-job training needs to be included so that workers are ready to work in the field
 - The training needs to make more of a connection to the realities of casework
 - Focus more on concurrent planning
 - Need to continue to evaluate the training curriculum
 - Provide additional training on the importance of the child's medical and social history (e.g., lifebooks)
 - Need to do more work on genograms
 - Look at families and children from a holistic perspective
 - Need to train on how to assess child's needs so that more support can be provided to the child
 - Need to discuss how to move a child (e.g., not using trash bags to move the child's belongings from one placement to another)
 - Discussing how assessors are pivotal in relaying messages to the different families regarding the child's life
 - Training curriculum needs to be developed that promotes having passion for this type of work
5. Do additional components need to be added regarding cultural competency? If so, what specific needs have you identified that need to be incorporated and why?
- Yes, additional work needs to be done on cultural competency and removing bias from the assessment process
 - Workers need tools that help them to be culturally sensitive
 - Assessment instruments need to be geared to helping minimize the amount of bias that comes into the decision making process when assessing children and appropriate adoptive placements
 - Teach how to recruit from other populations

- Cultural competence needs to be defined broadly. It isn't just an ethnicity issue but also inclusion of single families, gay and lesbian families, and other family types
 - Discussion needs to be included which challenges workers to be sensitive to people who are different than they are
 - The training environment needs to be open enough where the real issues can be discussed
 - Information needs to be included which teaches workers how to work with families who do not speak English as their primary language
 - Discussions need to include how to work with communities and have the family's entire system involved
6. What improvements have you seen in workers or in the system as a result of workers completing Tier I? Tier II?
- Skill level of workers has improved
 - They are better at assessing the appropriate placements
 - There has been a shift in thinking from "finding children for families" to finding "families for children"
7. What skills do they lack after completing Tier I? Tier II?
- They need more information on state and federal legislation
 - Need to incorporate more information on Senate Bill 27
 - Need to spend more time on separation and grief issues of children
 - Empathize, recognize, and assist children with coping
 - Need specific training on special needs of children and helping to make the families more ready for working with these children
 - Working with birth families before and after termination of parental rights (TPR)
 - Help assessors work with foster parents and their grieving over having a child move from foster home to adoptive home
 - Need to explore ways to use resource families to support birth, foster, and adoptive parents
8. What are your thoughts on the timing of delivery of Tier I and Tier II?
- Seems appropriate
9. In what ways are workers better or less prepared as a result of completing the training?
- They have a basic knowledge of assessment
 - They know some of the current legislation

10. What will make the training “cutting edge” or will promote current “best practices?”
 - Include more discussion on special needs adoptions
 - Include information on current federal and state legislation so that assessors understand the legal parameters
 - Include discussions on other family types

11. What other comments do you have that will strengthen the current adoption curriculum?
 - None- have been stated already

12. What ways would you suggest to strengthen the evaluation component of the training?
 - None, the evaluation has been informing the curriculum--evaluation needs to continue

ODJFS Adoption Section Questions

1. How is the training curriculum currently meeting the needs and mission of your organization?
 - The training is being provided to a large group of individuals and is helping the adoption process

2. Which policies need to be incorporated into the current adoption training curriculum?
 - Senate Bill 27
 - Federal laws--show how these really impact the adoption practice

3. What types of additional training need to be provided and to whom?
 - Can't think of any at this time

Appendix C

Court Personnel Focus Group Findings

Adoption Practice

1. What are the key issues facing adoption practice today?
 - Can gay couples adopt together?
 - How much can be disclosed in a closed adoption?
 - How do we deal with requests between 1964 and 1996?
2. In what ways do you see adoption practice changing in the future?
 - Pressure for open adoptions
 - Extending visitation rights to birth families
 - Adoption of embryos--there is a whole technological issue, includes surrogate parenting
 - Transracial adoption
 - Transsexual adoption

Adoption Assessor Training

3. What improvements have you seen in workers or in the system as a result of workers completing Adoption Assessor training?
 - Fewer questions like, “What do you want me to do?”
 - Paperwork
 - Improvements and frustrations
 - Hoops to jump through
4. Does the training provide the adoption assessors with all the skills and resources they need to complete a thorough assessment and provide appropriate post-placement services?
 - Several judges said that there weren't any problems.
5. What skills do they lack after completing Adoption Assessor training?
 - Don't lack any
 - Training is adequate
 - Some workers lack common sense; they need practical experience

Court Services Personnel

6. What specific training components are needed for your court personnel?

- Nothing, things are going well
- Suggestion – need a form that can be filled out online. Get a lot of trash using a typewriter. Some agencies refuse to use the standard form because of that.
- Need to know what kind of assessment is required when it's not a stepparent or a regular adoption- like a kinship adoption. Seems like overkill. Need a standardized form for kin adoption like ICPC. Seems like the cost of an adoption to do the obvious.
- Wide range of charges from different agencies, including the number of home visits. (There should be required standards for all.)

The following are issues raised outside the questions on the survey form.

- One judge asked for the definition of open adoption
- Researcher asked how many courts employ assessors. *None- all contract with individuals or use CSB assessments.*

*Important issue raised by many: **conflict of interest.** Do assessors have a motive to do a positive assessment so the adoption goes through? Shouldn't that be an independent person? Are they the same people who are meeting with the birth mother? This is a big concern, especially for private agencies. Agencies using their own employees is like lawyers using their wives as assessors.*

- *Wide range of skills of assessors*
- *The training is wonderful*
- *Adopters are highly motivated people. How much training/orientation do they have? One judge felt that they are not prepared, especially for children with special needs. There is still a conflict for agencies to place children quickly.*
- *Researcher asked if they were feeling a time crunch to finalize. No, have nothing but praise for 419. Does seem like assessment is overkill for kin adoption.*