

VII. OCWTP TRAINING CONTENT

Introduction

This portion of the assessment was designed to provide the OCWTP with information to:

- revise and update the OCWTP Universe of Competencies to reflect recent changes in child welfare practice;
- prioritize the development of new and more discrete competencies, where needed;
- determine training content areas of high systemic importance for skill development and transfer of learning interventions; and
- determine the field's perceptions regarding potential recipients of OCWTP training.

Information was gathered through focus groups with caseworkers, supervisors, case aides, child care workers, licensing specialists, regional training center staff, ODJFS technical assistance specialists (TASs), and technical assistance managers (TAMs.) Telephone interviews were conducted with county agency executive directors or their designees.

The following questions were asked:

- Executive directors or their designees were asked, “How can the OCWTP help your staff provide effective services to families and children?” and, “Who should be recipients of OCWTP training?”
- Supervisors were asked, “What would help you develop the necessary skills and increase the knowledge you need to do your job?” and, “In what content areas (supervisory practice and/or work with clients) do you need additional knowledge or skills?”
- Caseworkers were asked, “In what areas do you need additional training?”
- Case aides and child care workers were asked, “What would help you develop the necessary skills and increase the knowledge you need in order to do your job?”

- RTCs staff were asked, “In the past five years, have you seen any new trends in caseworker or supervisor training needs?” and, “Which workshops are requested more often than they were five years ago?”
- Trainers were asked, “In the last five years, have you seen a change in what caseworkers or supervisors are asking about during training?” and, “In the last five years, have you seen a change in caseworker or supervisory training needs?”

Data from these questions provided a significant amount of information on the content areas in which respondents perceived a need for further training. To determine which comments were the most significant and consistent, criteria were developed for weighting the data, with consideration given to the following factors:

- Different numbers of focus groups were held with different populations. There were eight RTC focus groups, 16 caseworker focus groups, four case aide focus groups, four child care worker focus groups, one focus group for technical assistance managers (TAMs), one for technical assistance specialists (TASs), one for licensing specialists, and three focus groups with trainers, two of which were conducted by telephone bridge line calls. Therefore, different thresholds were needed to determine levels of consistency of the data. For example, consistency was needed among four of the 16 caseworker focus groups to consider a topic significant enough to report, while the threshold for RTC focus groups was three of the eight groups.
- Individual Training Needs Assessment (ITNA) data was compared to focus group data to determine congruence between the focus group findings and ITNA data. If a competency area was rated on the ITNA as a high priority training need for roughly a quarter of the total staff who had completed ITNA instruments (approximately 450 out of 1,834 caseworkers, and approximately 90 of 362 supervisors), it was considered to be of high systemic importance.
- 23 individual telephone interviews were held with executive directors or their designees. Since there was very little consistency in their comments, each executive's response is reported below.
- The data from all three trainer focus groups is reported as one focus group with 15 trainers participating.

B. Training Content

FINDINGS:

In general, focus group participants identified common topic areas in which they believed training was needed. These topic areas were also consistent with recent trends in child welfare practice, and with changes in client characteristics, as discussed in the “Job Responsibilities” and “Client Characteristics” sections of this report. The assessment found that the core set of job responsibilities for caseworkers and supervisors had not fundamentally changed. However, the types of problems that contributed to abuse and neglect appeared to have become more varied, severe and complex in recent years. This has changed some aspects of the organization and delivery of child welfare services at the local level, and has also expanded the topic areas in which specialized knowledge and skill are needed.

Perceptions of Topic Areas Needed by Caseworkers

Caseworkers, executive directors/designees, licensing specialists, technical assistance specialists, and technical assistance managers all answered questions regarding topic areas in which they believed caseworkers needed knowledge or skill development.

Most Commonly Reported Topic Areas For Caseworkers By All Sampled Populations

A large majority of respondents in all focus groups reported the following topics to be important for caseworkers. This data includes findings reported by four or more caseworker focus groups, and by two or more focus groups with other categories of respondents. With the exception of worker safety, ITNA data confirmed that the following are high priority training needs.

- Caseworker safety; reported by 11 caseworker groups and five RTC groups. This topic area included ongoing safety training, and determining when caseworkers should take another worker with them into the field.
- Substance abuse; reported by 10 caseworker groups and four RTC focus groups. Specifics included: street drugs, over-the-counter medications, prescription drug abuse, and methamphetamine labs.

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- Mental health issues; reported by eight caseworker groups, five RTC groups, technical assistance managers, and licensing specialists. Specifics included: effects of mental illness on parenting, psychotropic medications, brief therapy, reality therapy, secondary trauma, and adult psychotherapy.
- Interviewing; reported by six caseworker groups, six RTC groups, licensing specialists, and trainers. Specifically mentioned were: interviewing children, advanced interviewing techniques, and cultural aspects of interviewing.
- Sexual abuse; reported by six caseworker groups and six RTC groups. Specifically mentioned were: sexually reactive children, juvenile sex offenders, preschoolers who have been sexually abused, and interviewing/interrogation of perpetrators.
- Juvenile court; reported by five caseworker groups and four RTC groups. Specifics included: testifying in court, preparing documents for court, court protocol, how to address the court, and how to inform magistrates and attorneys regarding child welfare issues.
- Domestic violence; reported by six caseworker groups and six RTC groups. Specifics included: the effects of domestic violence on children; how to confront domestic violence issues without putting the family or the worker at risk; helping mothers overcome their denial of domestic violence.
- Culture and diversity; reported by five caseworker groups, seven RTC focus groups; trainer focus group; and executive directors/designees. Specifically mentioned were: Appalachian culture, Somali culture, southeast Asian cultures, values and generational differences between workers and clients, working with specific ethnic and immigrant groups, and working with “generations X and Y”.
- Collaboration and coordination; reported by four caseworker groups and three RTC groups. Specifically mentioned were: working in collaboration with community partners and county DJFS staff; cross-system training; conducting family team meetings.

Additional Topics Identified Primarily By RTC Focus Groups

The following topic areas for caseworkers were identified by several RTC focus groups, but with a few exceptions, they were not identified by other focus groups.

- Working with adolescents; reported by five RTC groups and licensing specialists. Specifics included: helping foster and kinship parents work with adolescents who have mental health or substance abuse problems; promoting independent living; understanding adolescent suicide; disciplining youth; and adolescent gangs. ITNA data confirmed these to be high-priority training needs.
- Stress management; reported by three RTC groups. ITNA data also confirmed this as a high-priority need.
- Satanic cults; reported by five RTC groups
- Risk assessment; reported by six RTC groups and the trainer group. ITNA data confirmed this to be a high-priority training need.
- Juvenile violence; reported by four RTC groups. Three groups specifically mentioned juvenile sex offenders.
- Working with kinship providers; reported by four RTC groups and licensing specialists.
- Permanency planning/concurrent planning; reported by five RTC groups.
- Specialized training; all eight RTC groups reported that caseworkers who performed highly specialized functions needed training in their areas of specialization. These included social workers in public schools, court diversion workers, public information officers, court liaisons, sex abuse specialists, drug and alcohol specialists, child fatality specialists, and emancipation/independent living workers.
- Mediation; reported by six RTC groups.
- Time management; reported by six RTC groups.

Additional Topics Identified Primarily By Caseworker Focus Groups

The following topics were identified as important by caseworkers from 12 focus groups, and were supported by executive directors/designees and licensing specialists.

- Ohio Administrative Code
- Forms training

Additional Topics Identified Primarily By Trainers

The trainer focus group identified the following topic areas. However, with a few exceptions, these topics were not identified by other focus groups.

- Information on rules and policy formulation
- Agency-specific training in legal and general procedural issues
- Understanding roles and responsibilities of workers as case managers, as differentiated from direct providers of casework services. Technical assistance managers also identified case management.
- Training "in the basics." Data appears to reflect concern that many new staff have little experience in social work, and no social work education.
- Workers who are not adoption workers need some of the information included in the Adoption Assessor series.
- New workers need more orientation to their jobs.
- Workers need more application and skills training.
- Case planning
- Family dynamics
- Communication skills
- Non-judgmental and family-centered practice
- Permanency planning
- Relationship-building
- Placement philosophy and planning
- Basic information about child maltreatment
- Identifying separation and loss issues
- Planning and assessment
- Writing and documentation skills (licensing specialists also identified this)
- Empathizing with clients
- Ethics and values. This was also identified by an executive director, who stated that this was especially important since his agency was hiring "second career" social workers, and some staff did not have social work degrees.
- Listening and observation skills

Additional Topic Areas Identified By Executive Directors/Designees

There was no consistency among directors/designees' responses. This may be due, in part, to the fact that individual prompts were not used for this question.

Therefore, executive directors/designees provided information without reacting to a list of potential categories provided by the interviewer.

- Specifics on how to work with families
- Public relations work in the community
- How to represent their PCSAs
- Adapt core to include cultural differences between generations
- Changes in child welfare
- Help workers and supervisors understand each other
- Current trends in child welfare
- International adoptions
- Training on coal mining families
- Marketing for foster homes
- Educational needs of children
- One executive director suggested developing career ladders so workers who do not want to become supervisors could develop advanced skills in a specialized area of child welfare practice.

Additional Topics Identified By Licensing Specialists

The licensing specialist focus group identified the following topic areas, which reflect their own specialized area of practice. Only one of these areas was identified by another focus group, as noted.

- Attachment and separation
- Child development
- Working with birth families
- Agency-specific rules
- Incident reports
- Matching children and foster homes
- Working with siblings and the importance of maintaining sibling contact
- Crisis management skills
- De-escalation skills

- Training foster parents on reunification, and the importance of working with birth and kinship families to achieve reunification
- Basic writing skills for caseworkers and supervisors. (This was also identified by the TAS group.)

Additional Topic Identified By Technical Assistance Managers (TAMs)

The TAM focus group identified one topic area that was not identified by other respondents.

- Synthesizing information

Additional Topics Identified By Technical Assistance Specialists (TASs)

The TAS focus group identified one topic areas that was not identified by other respondents

- Customer service and engagement. They reported that administrative and support staff also need training in this topic area.

Individual Training Needs Assessment (ITNA) Data for Caseworkers

The focus groups reported general topic areas in which they perceived workers needed development. Compiled ITNA data provides more detailed information regarding training needs in the particular competencies, or elements of knowledge and skill, that together comprise a topic area. For example, the sexual abuse topic area contains 14 individual competencies, reflecting different elements of knowledge and skill.

Current ITNA data for the entire state was reviewed and compared with focus group data to identify areas of congruence.

The ITNA document contains two rating criteria: 1) the relevance of a competency to the respondent's current job responsibilities, and 2) the respondent's current level of mastery of that competency. High-priority training needs exist when staff members need considerable development in competencies that are very relevant to their jobs.

Listed below are the topic areas identified as high priority by approximately one quarter (i.e., 450) or more of the 1,834 workers who have ITNA data in the database.

A few of the topic areas listed below did not reach the 450 threshold. However, because these topic areas had been identified by focus groups, they are included in this report as a means of comparing ITNA data with focus group data.

Following is a list of high-priority topic areas as determined by ITNA data, followed by two numbers reflecting the range, from the highest to lowest numbers, of workers with identified training needs in any of the competencies that comprise the topic area.

Specialized Topic Areas:

- Sexual abuse 14 competencies; range 843 to 246 workers
- Working with adolescents; 7 competencies, range 565 to 330 workers
- Intake and the assessment of risk; 11 competencies, range 526 - 211 workers
- Adoption and foster care; 12 competencies, range 456 - 166 workers
- Legal issues in child welfare; 3 competencies, range 460 - 342 workers
- Family-centered assessment and intervention; 8 competencies, range 367 -146 workers

Related Skills Topic Areas:

- Treatment strategies and interventions; 8 competencies, range 701 - 383 workers
- Family systems theory and family therapy; 6 competencies, range 518 - 173 workers
- Casework with children; 3 competencies, range 755 - 490 workers
- Recognizing and assessing developmental delay and disability: 7 competencies; range 913 - 268 workers
- Parenting skills; 3 competencies, range 896 - 327 workers
- Adult psychopathology; 5 competencies, range 913 - 478 workers
- Substance abuse; 3 competencies, range 564 – 369 workers
- Cultural competence; 3 competencies, range 467-150 workers
- Family violence; 1 competency; 347 workers
- Understanding psychological evaluations; 1 competency, 637 workers
- Time and stress management and personal safety; 3 competencies, 545 workers for time management, 529 workers for stress management, and 296 workers for personal safety

- Human sexuality; 2 competencies, range 637 - 265 workers
- Writing skills for case documentation; 1 competency; 320 workers
- Health and medical Issues; 1 competency: 608 workers

Content Issues Related Specifically To Caseworker Core Training

The OCWTP *Core Curriculum for Child Welfare Caseworkers* was designed as a set of foundation-level workshops that provide training in competencies needed by all caseworkers to do their jobs. Training in core competencies sets the foundation for all further training. In the current OCWTP core training curriculum, core competencies are taught primarily to the knowledge understanding level, and to a beginning skill development level in a few critical topic areas. Specialized practice and related skills workshops were designed to further develop the knowledge and skills first introduced in Core training.

There was considerable agreement among executive directors/designees, licensing specialists, technical assistance managers and specialists that workers need additional skill development in topic areas first introduced in Core training. Included were topics such as placing children, engaging families, listening and observation skills, social work ethics and values, permanency planning, and case planning.

DISCUSSION:

- 1) Focus groups clearly identified that the topic areas most often perceived as important to caseworkers were: substance abuse, collaboration and coordination, juvenile court, mental health, culture and diversity, caseworker safety, domestic violence, sexual abuse, and interviewing. With the exception of worker safety, this data is confirmed by ITNA data.
- 2) The data indicates that workers need additional skill development in competency areas that are first introduced in Caseworker Core.
- 3) Some topic areas were perceived as important by few focus group participants. This probably reflects different perspectives of individual focus group participants, or an emphasis on respondents' areas of casework specialization.
- 4) There were some apparent inconsistencies between focus group data and ITNA data. ITNA data reflect the following topic areas to be of high priority, but they were not identified by focus groups:
 - services to single parents

- treatment strategies
- family systems theory and family therapy
- casework with children
- recognizing and assessing developmental delay and disability
- parenting skills
- time management
- stress management
- human sexuality
- health and medical issues

Additionally, there were some topic areas identified by focus groups for which there are no ITNA competencies. Rules and regulations, conducting family group meetings, and working with kinship providers are examples.

Possible explanations for these inconsistencies include the following:

- a) Some ITNA data reflects a level of specificity that may not have been achieved in focus groups. Focus groups were asked general, open-ended questions and directed to identify general topic areas in which additional training was needed. By contrast, ITNA competencies specify the discrete knowledge and skills needed to complete job responsibilities. ITNA data, therefore, is more targeted and specific. It is also possible that focus group responses would have been more specific had more precise questions been asked, resulting in greater consistency between focus group responses and ITNA findings.
- b) Focus group members are immediately attuned to recent events that may highlight potential child welfare training needs. For example, worker safety was not recorded in ITNA data as a high-priority training need, but it was considered a high need by focus groups. This may reflect a heightened awareness of the dangers inherent in the job, brought about by the recent murder of a Franklin County caseworker by a client. (See Section III, *Trends in Child Welfare*, for more information about caseworker safety.)
- c) Some focus groups identified content areas consistent with recent trends in child welfare work which have not yet been incorporated into the ITNA. For example, three RTCs identified “conducting family group conferencing” as an area in which training was needed. While there is a competency related to conducting family meetings, these do not specify family group conferencing.

Perceptions of Topic Areas Needed by Supervisors

FINDINGS:

Supervisors, licensing specialists, TAMs, and TASs, and executive directors or their designees were asked to identify topic areas in which they believed supervisors needed development. These responses were then compared with supervisors' ITNA data. When competencies on the ITNA fell below the established threshold of 90 supervisors (25%), but were consistent with focus group data regarding high-priority topic areas, the data is included below.

Most Commonly Reported Topic Areas

The broad topic area of "supervision and management" was identified by four supervisor groups, three RTC groups, and an executive director.

The following topic areas were identified by three or more focus groups. ITNA data confirms high training need in most of these areas.

- Conflict resolution; reported by two supervisor focus groups, one RTC group, and the trainer focus group. ITNA data confirms high need in this topic area.
- Clinical skills; four RTC groups and four supervisor groups reported that supervisors need additional development in casework competencies in order to supervise their workers. (See supervisor responses below.)
- Managing multiple priorities; reported by four RTC groups. ITNA data confirms this as a high priority training need. Seventy-nine supervisors ranked competency 537-1 (managing multiple priorities) as a high need.
- Leadership development; reported by four RTC groups; specifically, developing staff to assume supervisory and management positions.
- Interviewing and hiring skills; reported by three RTC groups. ITNA data confirms that competency 540-4 (interviewing strategies to assess applicants) is a high-priority training need.

- Supervising “generation X and Y” staff; reported by one supervisory focus group, one RTC group and one executive director. There are no specific competencies in the ITNA for this topic.

Each of the following topics was identified by one focus group or executive director:

- fundamental supervision
- advanced supervision
- managing difficult employees
- improved listening skills
- conducting effective and timely staffings
- “managing up” within the agency (working with upper level administrators)
- developing and implementing action plans
- developing strength-based performance tools
- supervisory use of learning styles
- flexible management style
- dealing with anger
- evaluating staff
- developing strength-based performance tools

Supervisor ITNA data supports these findings, with high-priority training needs identified in the following topic areas: supervising difficult employees, supervising for optimal job performance, planning and decision making, and managing change.

Supervisors’ Responses Regarding Training In Direct Service Topic Areas

Supervisors were asked to identify topic areas related to providing direct casework services to clients in which they believed they needed development. Their responses included:

- Case management and involving families in case planning; reported by one supervisor group.
- Managing sexual abuse cases; reported by one supervisor group and confirmed by ITNA data. Sixty-nine supervisors identified competency

522-1 (supporting workers who handle sexual abuse cases) as high priority.

- Working with foster parents; reported by one supervisor group and confirmed by ITNA data. Seventy supervisors identified competency 524-1 (applying policy and best practice standards to foster care/adoption services) as high priority.
- Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy; reported by one supervisor group.
- Impact of shaken baby syndrome; reported by one supervisor group.
- Developing permanency plans for older youth; reported by one supervisor group.
- Interviewing young children; reported by one supervisor group.
- Basic photography skills (for court displays); reported by one supervisor group.
- Distinguishing between prescribed and illegal drugs; reported by one supervisor group.
- Improved listening skills; reported by one supervisor group.

Executive Directors/Designees' Responses

Executive directors or their designees were asked to identify how the OCWTP could help staff provide effective services to families and children. Their responses included identification of important topic areas for supervisor skill development. However, there were neither clear trends nor consistency among their responses. Each response listed below was provided by one executive director.

- Supervision
- Management
- Team building—this was also identified by trainers, and ITNA data shows that “Team Development and Facilitation” is a high-priority training need for supervisors.
- Quality development and monitoring skills
- Lowering placement costs

- Grant writing
- Understanding Family-Centered, Neighborhood-Based services for community leaders

Regional Training Center Coordinators' Responses

The following three topic areas for supervisors were identified by either one or two RTC focus groups. They were not identified by other respondents.

- Accountability; reported by two RTC groups. ITNA data confirms this is a high priority training need. Sixty-seven supervisors rated 501-8 (organizing and monitoring work activities to assure effective performance) as high need.
- Supervising risk assessment; reported by two RTC groups.
- Retention; reported by one RTC group.

Technical Assistance Specialists' Responses

The TAS focus group identified one topic area for supervisors that was not identified by other respondents:

- Basic writing skills

Licensing Specialists' Responses

The licensing specialist focus group identified two topic areas for supervisors that were not identified by other respondents:

- Recruiting staff
- Policy development and implementation

Trainers' Responses

Trainers were asked to discuss recent changes in supervisors' training needs, and changes in the kinds of questions that supervisors asked during training. The following topic areas, not included in previous lists, were identified by trainers.

- Operating an agency: marketing, fiscal issues, public relations, and the agency's relationship with the community

- Transfer of learning

Individual Training Needs Assessment (ITNA) Data for Supervisors

ITNA data from June 2002 was compared with focus group data. The following list includes topic areas that were identified as high-need by approximately a quarter (n=90) of Ohio's supervisors who had completed the ITNA. In general, this data is consistent with information gathered from focus groups and interviews with executive directors/designees.

Listed below are the high-priority topic areas as determined by ITNA data, followed by two numbers reflecting the range, from highest to lowest number, of supervisors with identified training needs in any of the competencies that comprise the topic area.

- Management of conflict; 3 competencies, range 169 - 148 supervisors
- Staffing the agency; 7 competencies, range 145 - 108 supervisors
- Employee performance evaluation; 6 competencies, one of these competencies (534-6: potential impact of performance evaluations on Affirmative Action, Civil Service, union contracts, personnel policies) was rated high by 121 supervisors.
- Managing change; 4 competencies, range 121 - 107 supervisors
- Supervising difficult employees; 4 competencies, range 117 - 114 supervisors
- Supervising for optimal job performance; 8 competencies, one of these competencies (533-7: reducing organizational barriers to staff performance) was rated high by 116 supervisors.
- Team development and facilitation; 3 competencies, one of these competencies (538-3: facilitation strategies for achieving team goals) was rated high by 110 supervisors.
- Planning and decision making; 5 competencies, one of these competencies (531-2 strategic, long-range, and program planning) was rated high by 107 supervisors.

Issues Related Specifically To Supervisory Core Training

In response to the question, "What would help you develop the necessary skills and increase the knowledge you need in order to do your job?" supervisors from

two focus groups reported that Supervisory Core training provided them with a “good foundation,” and one focus group reported that they “still had high retention of information” learned in core workshops. Another supervisor focus group reported that supervisors needed additional on-site, “hands-on” training after Supervisory Core to gain a greater understanding of core content.

DISCUSSION:

There was consistency in supervisors' reported need for further training in casework competencies and clinical skills, even though there was little consistency among respondents in which particular clinical skills needed development. This does suggest, however, that the OCWTP should strengthen its ability to identify and address the training needs of supervisors in casework competency areas.

The focus groups provided a variety of divergent responses to questions about high-priority topic areas for supervisory training. However, many topic areas mentioned by respondents were consistent with ITNA data, particularly in the specialized and related skills competency areas, suggesting that these topic areas remain legitimate training needs for supervisors. Further, some of the responses were as broad as "general supervision and management skills," "managing difficult staff," and "managing up in the agency," which makes it difficult to discern exactly what topic areas respondents were reporting.

Perceptions of Topic Areas Needed by Case Aides

FINDINGS:

Four focus groups were held with case aides. Among other questions, they were asked to identify what would help them develop the necessary knowledge and skills to do their jobs. They identified a need for further development in the following topic areas.

- Worker safety, reported by four groups
- Social work training, reported by three groups
- Cross training with caseworkers, reported by three groups
- Communicable diseases, reported by three groups
- Dealing with difficult clients, reported by two groups
- Computer training, reported by two groups

- Child development, reported by two groups
- Day care licensing, reported by two groups
- Sign language, reported by one group
- Training with the vice unit at the local police department, reported by one group
- Stress management, reported by one group
- How to read a map, reported by one group
- Restraint training, reported by one group
- De-escalation, reported by one group
- New initiatives, policies, procedures, reported by one group
- Substance abuse, reported by one group (This included effects of drugs on children and families, and “what to look for.”)
- CPR training, reported by one group
- Adolescents, reported by one group (This included understanding their language.)
- Gang terms, reported by one group

DISCUSSION:

There were only a few topic areas identified as highly important for a majority of respondents (three or four of the focus groups.) These included worker safety, social work training, cross-training with caseworkers, and communicable diseases. The first three of these categories subsume a majority of the remaining topics reported, many of which are reflected in child welfare caseworker competencies (dealing with difficult clients, child development, stress management, de-escalation, substance abuse, working with adolescents, new initiatives, and cross training with police). The data suggest that many case aides perceive themselves as needing training comparable to that needed by caseworkers.

Perceptions of Child Care Workers’ Needs Training Content

Four focus groups were held with residential and group home child care workers. They were asked to identify what would help them develop the knowledge and skills necessary to do their jobs. They identified the following:

- Medication; reported by two groups
- Special needs; reported by two groups
- Stress management; reported by two groups
- Substance abuse, “what to look for,” reported by two groups
- Court/legal processes; reported by one group
- Foreign languages; reported by one group
- Sign language; reported by one group
- Communication; reported by one group
- Adolescent language; reported by one group

DISCUSSION:

A few topic areas were identified by half of the focus groups: medication, special needs, stress management, and substance abuse. One of the topic areas, substance abuse, was also identified as highly important to caseworkers and case aides. Most of the topic areas are reflected in child welfare caseworker competencies. As with the case aide data, this child care worker data suggests that case aides perceive themselves as having similar training needs as caseworkers.

Training Delivery Issues

While respondents were not asked specifically to discuss issues related to training delivery, there was sufficient spontaneous focus group discussion of these issues to warrant inclusion of the data in this report to assist in future OCWTP planning.

Some of the focus groups, notably executive directors or their designees, were asked their opinions about the most appropriate recipients of OCWTP training. Other groups commented on this topic spontaneously. This data is also reported here.

Respondents were asked the following questions, which generated much of this discussion:

- Executive directors/designees were asked their opinions about whom the OCWTP should train.

- Focus groups with case aides and child care workers were asked how the OCWTP could help them provide effective services to families. During discussion of this question, they provided opinions about whom the OCWTP should train.
- RTCs were asked to identify the categories of staff other than public child welfare staff who currently attend OCWTP workshops.
- Several focus groups offered spontaneous comments regarding training delivery issues while discussing other questions.

Training Delivery Issues Related to Caseworker Core Training

- Six of eight RTC focus groups reported that some caseworkers in caseworker Core training did not perform some of the responsibilities required of general child welfare caseworkers. Examples included prevention workers and social workers in the schools, who did not conduct risk assessments nor complete case plans. Core trainers expressed concern that these workers were not interested or involved in the application and skill development exercises related to risk assessment and case planning, and tended to distract other trainees during those portions of the training.¹
- The timing of Caseworker Core training is difficult and critical, according to the Technical Assistance Specialists (TAS) focus group. While it is important for caseworkers to be trained before they work with families, it is also important for them to have some experience with the work prior to attending Core, so they have a “contextual framework for the information.” In addition, one caseworker focus group suggested a “refresher course six months after Core... we’ll have more questions to ask then,” and another caseworker focus group suggested, “break up Core and spread it out.”
- Portions of Caseworker Core training were too basic or too theoretical, according to three caseworker focus groups.
- The absence of instruction on how to complete the Risk Assessment Matrix and the Ohio case planning form during Core training was problematic, according to two caseworker focus groups. The Technical Assistance Specialists focus group also recommended including instructions on completing the FRAM forms in Core training. This is consistent with comments from caseworkers and executive directors/designees, who reported that workers needed additional training on policy and forms.

¹ This issue was discussed during a key informant meeting with Core trainers during the ODJFS mandatory meeting for trainers in December 2001.

General Comments Regarding the Delivery of Training

During several focus groups, participants offered suggestions regarding the delivery of training. Following is a list of those comments. Most of these comments are summarized; quotation marks indicate direct quotes.

- More skill-based training should be implemented, reported by seven executive directors/designees and three RTC groups
- Implement more transfer of learning strategies, reported by three RTC groups
- Provide training on-site in local agencies, reported by three executive directors/designees
- “Training should respond to current trends quickly, not a year later,” reported by one executive director
- Implement a degree program so “workers can get their degrees,” reported by one executive director
- “Don’t do training using computers. Workers learn best one-to-one, classroom style, encompassing more than one county. It gives diversity to the group and helps them learn from one another;” reported by one executive director. Another executive mentioned that workers would most likely be called away from computer training to respond to caseload emergencies.
- Partner with universities, reported by one executive director
- Continue to offer training for “veteran staff,” reported by one executive director
- Train supervisors and caseworkers together, reported by one executive director
- Provide cross-system training for systems that “fail to do their jobs,” reported by one supervisory focus group (Specifically mentioned were mental health, drug and alcohol, PRC, and TANF systems.)
- Provide more specialized training to “take workers to the depth of the topic,” reported by one technical assistance specialists group

- At times trainers are not consistent in the information provided during training; at times, incorrect information is given, reported by one technical assistance specialists group

Who Should Attend OCWTP Training?

Historically, the OCWTP has provided training primarily to PCSA caseworkers and supervisors. However, the OCWTP also has, within its financial and organizational capacity, provided some training to a broader group of child welfare professionals serving maltreated children and their families.

For several years, the OCWTP Steering Committee voted to allocate 12 percent of each year's training budget to address the needs of foster parents, parent aides, and child care workers. It was also agreed that these staff could attend other OCWTP training on a space-available basis. The OCWTP performed some coordination of training activities for these other populations.

The OCWTP also developed an ITNA instrument and standardized curricula to train foster parents. Regional Training Center coordinators assisted local PCSAs to implement foster parent ITNAs and helped to coordinate follow-up training. Foster parent and child care trainers routinely attended Training of Trainer workshops, and some were formally approved as OCWTP trainers. Additionally, the OCWTP developed an ITNA for executive directors and, in collaboration with Case Western Reserve University, provided extensive training for executives. The OCWTP also routinely provides training to community service providers on a "space available basis."

The recent implementation of H.B. 332 discontinued OCWTP's involvement in training foster parents, and in recent years, little training has been offered for executive directors, upper level administrators, case aides, child care workers, or other PCSA staff.

The statewide developmental needs assessment gathered data regarding who should be trained by the OCWTP. Executive directors/designees were asked whom they believed should be trained by the OCWTP. Regional training center staff were asked who currently attended training in their regions. Following is a summary of the findings, listed according to training population group.

- Executives and Administrators: Slightly under half of the executive directors/designees stated that the OCWTP should provide training to executive directors, administrators, and upper level managers.
- Child Care Workers: Slightly under half of the executive directors/designees stated the OCWTP should train child care workers. Child care workers identified significant training needs. In one focus group they reported having very limited access to training. RTC staff reported

the amount of child care training provided by the OCWTP varies considerably by region. East Central Ohio RTC and Southeast Ohio RTC regularly provide child care worker training, while Northeast Ohio and Central Ohio RTCs provide very little, because it is regularly provided by private residential facilities. Western Ohio, Southwest Ohio, and Northwest Ohio RTCs reported they did not provide child care worker training because of inadequate numbers to form classes. North Central Ohio RTC reported they don't have any child care workers in their region.

- Case Aides: Slightly under half of the executive directors/designees stated that case aides should be trained. Some case aides attend caseworker training, but very few workshops are developed specifically for them. All case aide focus groups reported they could provide better services to families and increase their assistance to caseworkers if they were provided with additional training. RTCs reported considerable variation in training for case aides. Central and North Central Ohio RTCs provide training for case aides, while Southeast, Northwest, and Northeast Ohio RTCs do not. Northwest Ohio RTC reported that barriers to case aide training included the lack of specific curricula for case aides, and difficulty experienced by case aides in being away from their agencies to attend training.
- Foster Parents: Approximately one half of the executive directors/designees interviewed stated that the OCWTP should train foster parents. The amount of foster parent training provided has historically varied considerably across OCWTP regions.
- Support staff: A few executive directors/designees reported that PCSA support staff should be trained through the OCWTP. There was no data gathered from RTCs on how much training was provided to support staff.
- Staff from community social service organizations: Approximately one third of the executive directors/designees stated that managed care providers should be trained. A few stated that Guardians ad litem should be trained, and one suggested that teachers, police officers, and county commissioners receive an overview workshop on child protective services. RTCs reported that a variety of staff from community agencies attend OCWTP workshops on a space-available basis. Most of these staff are employed by agencies that collaborate with PCSAs. Examples are: juvenile courts, community social service providers, private foster care and adoption agencies, youth detention, law enforcement, and parole staff.

Barriers to Providing Training

Regional training center staff who participated in focus groups were asked, “What barriers do you have in providing training requested in your region?” Following are the issues reported by three or more RTCs:

- Inadequate training space or parking, reported by four RTCs
- Location of training and drive time (presumably, this indicated that the drive time for trainees to attend workshops was prohibitive), reported by five RTCs
- Lack of adequate numbers of RTC staff, reported by four RTCs
- Administrative budget is inadequate or lacks flexibility, reported by all eight RTCs
- Difficult to get response from ODJFS staff who manage the OCWTP, reported by six RTCs
- Train Track is inadequate, reported by six RTCs
- Responding to “knee jerk” reactions and requests of PCSA management, reported by four RTCs
- Length of training, especially Core 102, reported by three RTCs
- Participants want shorter workshops for specialized and related topics, reported by four RTCs
- PCSA staff are not aware of what workshops are being offered, reported by five RTCs
- Time constraints in planning and setting up requested or needed training, reported by three RTCs.
- Lack of qualified trainers, specifically mentioned were domestic violence (reported by two RTCs), sexual abuse (reported by two RTCs), psychotropic medications (reported by one RTC), AIDS, witchcraft, WICCA, and support staff (reported by one RTC)

Other topics were mentioned by one or two RTCs and appeared to be specific to those regions.

DISCUSSION:

- 1) A majority of executive directors and their designees, case aides and child care workers stated that the OCWTP should train all PCSA staff (including foster parents) who work with client families. In addition, some executive directors/designees thought the OCWTP should provide training to managed care providers. In practice these staff routinely attend training on a space-available basis at all of the RTCs.
- 2) Trainers and RTCs concurred that it was problematic for caseworkers whose jobs did not require completing risk assessments or case plans to attend portions of Caseworker Core that focus on skill development in those topic areas.
- 3) Licensing specialists, caseworkers, and executive directors/designees all stated that workers needed more training on policy, rules, and how to complete forms, especially risk assessment and case planning forms. They recommended including explanations of policy and forms into existing workshops, including Caseworker Core.
- 4) There was considerable consistency among RTCs regarding the barriers they encounter in delivering training (see “Barriers to providing training” on previous two pages). Most of these issues have been problematic for several years.

**DECISIONS OF THE OCWTP STEERING COMMITTEE REGARDING
TRAINING CONTENT**

- 1) **The OCWTP will review and revise, as necessary, caseworker and supervisory competencies to reflect best practice standards, include additional high-priority topic areas as identified by the Assessment Report, and divide accreted competencies into discrete competencies.** (This decision is also supported by assessment findings presented in Section IV, *Work Force Characteristics*, and Section V, *Client Characteristics*.)
- 2) **The OCWTP will collect additional information about significant populations of “new arrivals,” by RTC region, and identify resources available to assist RTC coordinators in responding to staff training needs when working with specific client populations.** (This decision is also supported by assessment findings presented in Section IV, *Work Force Characteristics*, Section V, *Client Characteristics*, and Section VI, *Culture and Diversity: Providing Responsive Services*.)
- 3) **While ODJFS is primarily responsible for laws, rules, and policy training, the OCWTP will integrate laws, rules, and policy into appropriate sequenced competency training.** (This decision is also supported by assessment findings presented in Section IV, *Work Force Characteristics*.)
- 4) **The OCWTP will incorporate competencies related to intra-agency and cross-system collaboration into OCWTP training for all target groups at all levels in the training sequence.** (This decision is also supported by assessment findings presented in Section III, *Trends in Child Welfare*, and Section IV, *Work Force Characteristics*.)
- 5) **The OCWTP will identify methods to help supervisors gain necessary clinical skills and perform educational supervision.** (This decision is also supported by assessment findings presented in Section IV, *Work Force Characteristics*, and Section VIII, *Skill Building and Transfer of Learning*.)

The findings indicate that supervisors need additional knowledge and skill development in core-level caseworker competencies. This suggests that the needs assessment process for supervisors incorporate caseworker competencies, and that training be developed for supervisors to address these learning needs.

- 6) **The OCWTP will gather additional information regarding the numbers and types of nontraditional casework staff that are currently employed in county public children service agencies and their job**

responsibilities. This will include social workers in schools, court diversionary workers, prevention workers, juvenile services workers, outreach workers, independent living workers, and other non-traditional casework positions. The OCWTP will use this information to develop and conduct informant focus groups for these job areas. The OCWTP will utilize information gained from these key informant groups to inform the development of competencies and curricula. (This decision is also supported by assessment findings presented in Section IV, *Work Force Characteristics*.)

The data in this section also has implications for a number of issues related to the content and delivery of Core training. These include: how to update Core curricula for caseworkers and for supervisors to accurately reflect the current focus of child welfare work; whether to increase the length of Core training to introduce additional high-priority content areas, or to incorporate stronger skill-building segments; whether and how caseworker Core training should address training on rules, policy, and completing risk assessment and case plan forms; and, the development of on-the-job coaching and transfer of learning interventions that support Core training.

The OCWTP will need to consider how to provide Core training to caseworkers who do not conduct risk assessments or case planning in their work. Examples include prevention workers and social workers in the schools, who must understand risk assessment and case planning, but who may not actually perform these functions.

- 7) In the recent past, the OCWTP provided training to foster caregivers. However, HB 332, which became effective in October 2000, did not include foster caregivers as training recipients of the OCWTP. The OCWTP Steering Committee will resume the provision of training to foster caregivers. Each regional training center will work with their respective counties to determine the best methods for ensuring foster caregiver training.**

- 8) The OCWTP will collaborate with ODJFS and PCSAO to design and deliver training opportunities to public child welfare executive directors, social service administrators, and other management personnel on child welfare funding, state and federal laws, caseworker and case aide safety issues, management issues, county collaboration strategies, understand the missions and pressures of other service systems, negotiating skills and strategies, and other needed content areas.** (This decision is also supported by assessment findings presented in Section III, *Trends in Child Welfare*.)

- 9) **The OCWTP will conduct focus groups to identify specific job responsibilities of public agency case aides, parent aides, homemakers, community liaisons, and others who provide direct services to families. Competencies will then be revised and staff will be able to access appropriate existing or newly developed training.** (This decision is also supported by assessment findings presented in Section IV, *Work Force Characteristics*.)
- 10) **The OCWTP will continue to offer training to public residential child care workers on a space-available basis. The existing public residential child care worker competencies will be reviewed and revised to ensure compliance with current law and rule.** (This decision is also supported by assessment findings presented in Section IV, *Work Force Characteristics*.)

Data from this assessment suggest that the OCWTP consider reopening discussion about its training constituency. Focus groups reported that case aides and child care workers were not adequately trained, and that executive directors and upper level managers also needed training. These staff directly impact the quality of services to children and families. Assessment respondents overwhelmingly concurred that these were appropriate training populations for the OCWTP.