Providing Skill-Building and Transfer-of-Learning Opportunities in the Field

Introduction

Given the numerous challenges facing them, agencies must take a thoughtful approach to assuring that skill-building and transfer-of-learning functions are implemented in the field. Members of the Skill-Building and Transfer Advisory Committee have shared a number of innovative strategies currently being used throughout the state to support training, and to support on-the-job skill building and transfer of learning.

- In-house training units that oversee new worker training that include a variety of elements such as shadowing, classroom lectures, and time in the field.
- Board approved policy statements addressing authorization of minimal caseload responsibilities during new worker training; restrictions on the amount of court involvement new workers can have and the level of case severity they can initially handle; using the "life of a case" during new worker training; and the assignment of experienced staff as new worker mentors.
- The creation of student field placement units that oversee the internships of undergraduate and graduate students,
- Leadership development programs that include mentoring relationships with experienced administrators.
- Hiring a consultant to provide coaching to supervisors and caseworkers on writing case plans.
- University partnerships that provide special core training and CPS internships as a part of the undergraduate curricula.

The following models provide support on the job for skill building and transfer of learning. They were developed from suggestions received from Ohio CPS professionals over the past several months and from ideas gathered from national programs about how local agencies support training, skill building and transfer of learning when their staff return from training. The model implemented needs to fit the needs of each county. Elements of these models might be pulled together to develop new models that would work for a particular agency.

In- House Skill-Building and Transfer-of-Learning Models– Suggestions from the Field

Model	Advantages	Drawbacks
Generic Model • Supervisors are responsible for SBT functions in their units • Supervisor or senior workers in the unit act as coaches • Supervisor organizes all coaching and field assignment opportunities • Supervisor meets with workers to discuss training experiences, learning needs, and training plans	• Helps keep supervisors current • If organized with suggested field SBT assignments, it can make the work easier by maximizing any informal shadowing/coaching that is already happening on the unit • Offers a supervisory opportunity for a senior worker who has the knowledge and skills to mentor and coach	• Current supervisor workload demands may be a barrier to this option • Assumes that all supervisors have a desire to provide educational supervision to their staff • Assumes that all supervisors have the necessary clinical skills to provide SBT support in the field. • Might require the hiring of additional supervisors to handle the additional workload
Section Supervisor as Mentor & Coach Model • A section supervisor has the lead responsibility for coaching and mentoring workers from all units within the section (i.e., intake, on-going, etc.) • This supervisor provides case coverage during worker's absence when in training, or • Offers a solution for case coverage while workers are away at training • Provides clinical and educational support to section staff	• Staff have opportunity to develop a relationship with one individual whose primary focus is their learning	• Possibility of the supervisor being overwhelmed with responsibilities for educational supervision as well as coverage. This may result in feeling pulled in too many directions at once • Smaller agencies may only have one or two supervisors responsible for everything
Training Team Model • Agency sets up a training team • Team supervisor is the mentor, organizing coaching opportunities and overseeing new worker's learning • Senior workers are a part of the team and have reduced caseloads in order to coach new workers • All new workers start on this team and are then reassigned when training is completed	• All new workers are together making the training function easier to coordinate • The cohort group might be helpful to new workers providing opportunity to share learning experiences • This model would free up other supervisors within the agency	• Supervisor will need to search out coaching opportunities for tasks that are not common to the team • Model would work better if training team were generic • For agencies with a shortage of experienced workers, it may be difficult to free them up with reduced caseloads to be able to handle the extra workload • Assumes coaching and TOL activities are only needed fro new employees

In- House Skill-Building and Transfer-of-Learning Models– Suggestions from the Field

Model	Advantages	Drawbacks
Training Coordinator/Mentor Model • Training coordinator is mentor (or larger agencies might have a training coordinator and several mentor positions) • Training Coordinator would be responsible for organizing all agency training and SBT efforts • Mentor would organize coaching opportunities for staff and meet with staff to develop individual developmental plans	• The person hired for this position would likely have a genuine interest in training and mentoring • The person hired for this position would need to have direct CPS experience • Alleviates some educational supervision responsibilities of from frontline supervisors	• Agency would need to be large enough to anticipate constant training needs • Supervisors would not have an opportunity to know the workers before they start to carry cases • The training coordinator might not have expertise in every area of needed learning • This model would be difficult to implement in satellite offices
Shared In-House Training/Coaching Model • Several agencies within a cluster group or region would share an in-house training/coach coordinator	• Would provide control over timing and location of training • Would ease the SBT workloads of supervisors	• Would need to be aware of agency specific policies and procedures that may vary within the group or region
Topic or Content Approach • Supervisors from specific units (e.g., intake, on-going, etc.) would mentor new workers in their area of expertise • Senior workers from each section or unit would act as coaches	• Increased workload for supervisors would be shared throughout the agency • Workers would be mentored by individuals with expertise in the area of learning • Coaches would have expertise in the area of learning • Having several mentors may provide an increased possibility of a long term mentoring relationship because new worker has more individual personalities to identify with. Having one supervisor assigned might result in a relationship that does not match	• Might not work in a generic agency unless modified to use individuals with expertise in specific topic areas as mentors • Having a mentor for only specific areas of learning may not provide the time for an effective mentoring relationship to develop • Would need to provide incentive to senior workers acting as coaches

Mentoring/Coaching Models and In-House Training Models – Suggestions from the Field

Model	Advantages	Drawbacks
Statewide Pool of Coaches • Experienced consultants from around the state would be trained to act as on-site coaches	• Assists supervisors with educational supervision by providing coaching to needed staff • Coaches would be selected because of their clinical expertise • Persons hired would have interest in training and coaching	• Coaches would need to be familiar with policies and procedures that may be county specific
Division of Supervisory Functions • Supervisors within an agency would divide supervisory functions to allow one to be responsible for administrative supervision, freeing the other to focus on educational supervision	• Helps ease the burden of supervision by dividing up functions • Educational supervisor would have interest and skills to do clinical/educational supervision	• Tasks may not be easily divided and it may be difficult for the supervisor responsible for administrative functions to maintain supportive relationships with staff on the unit