

Louisiana Child Welfare Comprehensive Workforce Project



Summary of Findings from the Office of Community Services Statewide Training System Assessment



Louisiana Child Welfare
Comprehensive Workforce Project

The Approach

- The Office of Community Services (OCS) and LCWCWP staff met with Susan Kanak and Linda Kean from the National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement and produced an assessment tool, core critical questions for the focus groups and a basic format for the focus groups customized for Louisiana.
- 197 employees participated in the assessment. Employees included front line workers and supervisors from all 10 regions, training staff and state office administrators/ program managers.

Participants

Twenty – two focus groups were conducted Statewide – two in each of the ten Regions and two in Central Office in Baton Rouge.

197 – OCS Staff Total

95 – Direct Line OCS Staff

50% - MSW

75 – Direct Supervisory Staff

48% - Bachelors Degree

21 – OCS Staff in Central Office

2% - No Data

6 – OCS Training Staff

50% - African American Staff

43% - Caucasian

3% - Other

4% - No Data

Key Findings

Key findings are summarized within 3 categories:

1. New worker training (NWT),
2. Professional development
3. General training system.

Key Findings

New Worker Training

- NWT is too short, too overwhelming, lacking specialization/integration to employment programs and lacking realistic scenarios for application purposes.

Suggestions:

- Expand NWT for a longer duration
- Integrate job shadowing/mentoring including purposeful observations linked to training modules for skill integration
- Provide supervisors with the information presented in NWT and plan for how they could facilitate continuity of training in the field.

Key Findings

Professional Development

- Trainings related to supervision, leadership/management development, sensitivity (especially in terms of state administration and field office personnel engagement), and general professional growth were highly requested across groups).

Suggestions

- Increase trainings in specialization areas such as domestic violence, substance abuse, poverty, cultural responsiveness, engaging the legal and court systems, disabilities, and identification of community resources.
- Provide equal opportunities and equitable access to trainings across all levels, programs, and regions of the agency.
- Offer workers case coverage while they attend trainings.

Key Findings

General Training System: participants across all levels of the OCS system provided feedback on the ongoing training system as a whole that clustered around four areas: *methods, tools, communication, and philosophy/practice*

Suggestions for Methods

- Increase hands-on experiences, mentoring, job shadowing and year round training*
- Provide all OCS staff with equal access to all trainings including external conferences and ethics training regardless of credentials*
- Offer supervisors training on new initiatives first, after a true pilot run has been completed and the “kinks” resolved*
- Make trainings for newly promoted supervisors available at the time of promotion*

Key Findings

General Training System Continued

- Suggestions for Tools
 - Supply all materials and equipment related to new forms in the trainings. Every effort should be made to ensure the tools are in their final state before mandating their implementation in the field. If a tool is computer-based, then the training **MUST** use a computer.
 - Consider need, input (from internal and external stakeholders), relevance, impact to workload, and utility into the decision making process before changing or adding a form/initiative.
 - Include direct level staff and other relevant parties as part of the decision making process for adopting new tools/methods of practice.

Key Findings

General Training System Continued

- Suggestions for Communication
 - Increase the clarity, consistency and tenor of communication across all levels of the agency (There is a perceived communication gap and disconnect between state office and the field).
 - Increase efforts to treat all staff with respect, acknowledge the positive work completed by staff, and increase attention to the reality of the traumatic toll inherent to the field of child welfare on staff. Specific recommendations from front line workers and supervisors included requests for positive emails, increase public relations identifying the value of child welfare workers in the community, increased accuracy in personnel evaluations, and proactive supports to staff during times of trauma/disaster.
 - Increase communication with external partners.

Brief Summary

The most urgent requests from the training system and the agency as a whole were:

1. To show more respect for all agency staff
2. Develop more consistency across all programs and regions
3. Prioritize skill development and critical thinking throughout the life of a case and the career of a worker

Brief Summary

1. Enhance the connection between state office and the field
2. Demonstrate more of a commitment to a child welfare/social work focus rather than a case work/paperwork focus
3. Provide clinical supervision, provide hands-on training through job shadowing and/or mentoring
4. Reduce the rate that changes are made to the training system

Recommendations

Immediate Recommendations (0-6 months)

- Provide more access to Supervision training
- Hire retired supervisors to provide hands-on coaching, training/mentoring for newly promoted supervisors
- Encourage state office staff to visit regional offices to provide direct communication regarding program/policy updates
- At all levels within the agency, all staff in management positions should provide some forms of praise/acknowledgement to their workers through email, voicemail or hand written notes.

Recommendations

Short-term Recommendations (6-12 months)

- Develop a web-based training system platform similar to what the State of Idaho has launched, linking universities and OCS as training partners. Develop core training modules for all OCS staff and electives for specializations and put all of these online
- Restructure the role of clerical staff to include assisting with paperwork
- Develop leadership training for skilled/motivated workers in a structured, meaningful way with equal opportunities for all staff around the state
- Reduce the caseload of senior skilled/motivated workers to allow them to provide mentoring to younger staff

Recommendations

Short-term Recommendations Continued

- Completely redesign new worker orientation
 - Provide a more systematic/organized training with modules focusing on specific content areas
 - Expand NWO to a period of up to a year
 - Include basic components of child/adolescent development and how it is impacted by agency involvement
 - Encourage critical thinking skills and underlying philosophy of family centered practice allied with the OCS Practice Model
 - Include job shadowing/mentoring with seasoned workers
 - Create more interactive training on forms

Recommendations

Short-term Recommendations Continued

- Provide supervisors with an overview of material to be covered and their role in the transfer of knowledge
- Provide supervisors with feedback on their workers' performance in NWO
- Provide enhanced court training including mock trials, how to prepare, the nature of the court/DSS relationship, etc...
- Develop specialized training modules by program area in consultation with key program staff and regional offices
- Improve access to NWO training by offering modules across all regions of the state

Recommendations

Long-term Recommendations (2-5 years)

- Provide joint training with agency staff, universities and partners/stakeholders
- Develop leadership academy for senior workers/supervisors online
- Expand the use of technology in the web-based training system platform to include training via webinars, webcasts, teleconferences, and podcasts

Recommendations

These were presented to the Secretary and key staff in July, 2009.

During this fiscal year we are focusing on these priorities:

- Focus on a range of supervisory initiatives statewide; development of the web-based training platform to revamp NWO; and begin to develop the legal and judicial system modules have been identified as the top three priorities for year two.

Recommendations

- Continued work with OCS Regional Offices staff development and appreciation events beginning with Thibodaux, Lafayette, Shreveport and Monroe, and then restarting with remaining Regions, with a new topic beginning with Alexandria, Lake Charles, Orleans, Jefferson, Baton Rouge, and Covington.

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